

**Submission
No 77**

INQUIRY INTO COSTS FOR REMEDIATION OF SITES CONTAINING COAL ASH REPOSITORIES

Organisation: Australian Manufacturing Workers Union New South Wales
Branch

Date Received: 14 February 2020

Australian Manufacturing Workers Union New South Wales Branch

Submission to

Costs for remediation of sites containing coal ash repositories

Addressing terms of reference

That the Public Works Committee inquire into and report on the costs for remediation of coal ash repositories in New South Wales, and in particular:

(a) prospective or current quantum of government liability for remediating contamination at sites associated with:

- (i) Mount Piper power station,
- (ii) Bayswater power station,
- (iii) Liddell power station,
- (iv) Vales Point power station,
- (v) Eraring power station, and
- (vi) any other relevant power station.

(b) prospective timing of government expenditure in relation to remediation at those sites,

(c) economic and employment opportunities associated with coal ash re-use, site remediation and repurposing of land,

AMWU

The Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union represents workers in all areas of manufacturing. Our coverage includes workers in metals and engineering, food and confectionary, printing, design, and packaging, vehicle building, service, and repair, and technical, laboratory, supervisory, and administrative work and trades.

Our union is led by workers in our industries of coverage and has been at the forefront of many campaigns over our 160-year history, both fighting to improve workers' rights industrially, as well as standing up for a fair and equitable society for all Australians.

We campaign for a better deal at work, for strengthening Australian industry, and for good, secure jobs for all Australians. We work to advance our members' interests at a local, national, and global level.

Background

The NSW/ACT Branch of the AMWU represents approximately 14,000 workers across the state and territory. Over 2,500 of these members work in the Hunter and Central Coast region of NSW. Of these, around 70% of our members work in jobs in the coal, power generation or aluminium industries.

The AMWU represents skilled tradespeople at all the NSW Power Stations mentioned in clause 1 (a) of the terms of reference. Our union is acutely aware of the planned closure of these power stations and the need for significant investment not only in the landscape's surrounding the facilities, but in the jobs that the affected communities will shift to.

While some closures are further away than others, the need for organised planning and transition is a long-term commitment. New industries and vocations should be imbedded in communities well before structural closures take place.

The AMWU supports the continuation of power stations so long as it is required for workers livelihoods and baseload power generation, the need for future jobs investment is not mutually exclusive to that position.

Regeneration of land and community around power stations should be explored as an immediate transition opportunity.

This approach should be part of a wider program to invest in the future of communities that have previously relied on coal fired power generation.

Recommendations

1. The New South Wales Government should initiate a feasibility study into the viability of processing and reuse of coal ash in New South Wales.
2. This study should give significant consideration to the following:
 - (1) The existing environmental impacts of fly ash disposal
 - (2) The environmental and safety impacts of its reclamation and processing
 - (3) The number and types of employment opportunities proposed to be created from the contract
 - (4) The ongoing nature or security of this employment and the skills required
 - (5) The commitment to upstream and downstream jobs creation (including transport, laboratory and R&D) locally
 - (6) The safety practices and record of any business awarded contracts
 - (7) The employment practices and industrial arrangements of any business awarded contracts
 - (8) The corporate citizenship of any business awarded contracts – particularly their tax record
3. This study should consider how the awarding of such contract would interact with other programs and initiatives aimed at job creation and community resilience in communities around power stations.
4. This study should consider the broader opportunities in establishing a tripartite approach, engaging community, union and businesses in developing a proper response to environmental issues and the transition away from fossil fuels.
5. The New South Wales Government should engage the corporations who own the power stations to carry the cost for environmental clean-up.