

**Submission
No 18**

**INQUIRY INTO PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT
OPERATIONS AMENDMENT (CLEAN AIR) BILL 2021**

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I strongly support the proposed Clean Air Bill 2021 and the strict best practice pollution controls it would mandate.

Pollution from emissions from coal fired power stations impacts human health

- The most recent analysis of health impacts caused by coal fired power stations in Australia has found that they contribute to 845 babies being born with low birthweight, 14,434 children with asthma, and 785 premature deaths each year.
- Children and older people are most vulnerable to the health impacts of air pollution.
- There is abundant evidence that fine particle exposure can cause adverse health effects and increased risk of death. There is no lower threshold for these effects.
- Nitrogen dioxide is strongly associated with childhood asthma and impaired lung development, which can lead to lifelong adverse health effects and premature death.
- Long term exposure to sulfur dioxide, even at low concentrations, has been associated with cardiorespiratory mortality.

The impact of air pollution is costly

- Not only does air pollution cost lives, but it costs the economy. The economic cost of premature death attributed to ambient air pollution in Australia has been estimated at up to AUD\$24 billion per year.
- The health cost to the Australian economy from coal fired power stations alone is \$2.4 billion dollars annually.

- In addition to adopting the Clean Air Bill, the Government should ensure the Load Based Licencing review is finalised as soon as possible and in a way that effectively internalises the health cost of pollutants emitted by coal fired power stations.

Australian air pollution standards are weak compared to many other countries

- Power stations in NSW are licenced to emit toxic air pollution at concentrations far greater than power stations in other jurisdictions. For several decades the US, EU, South Korea, China, Japan and other nations have required increasingly effective pollution controls for particle matter, nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide and mercury.

Technologies to reduce pollution from coal fired power station emissions are well established and should be standard practice

- Various forms of technology exist to reduce emissions from coal fired power stations such as:
 - o wet scrubbers, or flue gas desulfurisation which can remove up to 99% of sulfur pollution and also remove mercury; and
 - o selective catalytic reduction methods which can be added to power stations to reduce over 90% of oxides of nitrogen from emissions.

- Emissions limits that apply to the NSW coal fired power stations must be reduced to force the power stations to install these best practice pollution reduction technologies.

No coal fired power station should be exempt from the standards proposed in the Clean Air Bill

- Under current legislation, some NSW power stations, such as Vales Point, are given an exemption from tougher air pollution emissions limits that would otherwise apply to them under the Protection of the Environment Operations Act (Clean Air) Regulation 2010 (Clean Air Regulation).

10 This means some station operators do not have to substantially improve pollution control technology as the power station get older, which

The Clean Air Bill would go to ensuring that all coal fired power stations are required to install best practice pollution control technology regardless of their age.