

INQUIRY INTO EMISSIONS FROM THE FOSSIL FUEL SECTOR

Organisation: Sydney Knitting Nannas & Friends

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Submission to the Joint Standing Committee Inquiry into Emissions from the Fossil Fuel Sector

Sydney Knitting Nannas¹ appreciate the opportunity to make this submission to the Joint Standing Committee Inquiry into Emissions from the Fossil Fuel Sector.

Importantly, we note with concern the Net Zero Commission 2024 Annual Report finding that unless action to reduce emissions is accelerated, NSW will fail to meet our 2030 and 2035 targets. **This finding underscores the importance of this Joint Standing Committee inquiry and highlights the need for the NSW Government to ratchet up its efforts to reduce emission from the fossil fuel sector.**

As a grass-roots community group of concerned citizens, we urge the Committee to take note of the significant and growing public concern about global warming and associated extreme weather, including floods and fires. Flooding has caused immense harms in NSW this year, with some communities experiencing the devastating impacts of flooding multiple times in this one year.

Wild fires, droughts and floods have made us very aware that NSW is on the global front line of extreme climate change impacts. It is therefore imperative for the citizens of NSW that the government do all it can to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial temperatures.

Limiting global warming can only be achieved by real reductions in emissions from the fossil fuel sector. It is this sector that is the key driver of global warming but it will continue to push to expand in spite of the harms it causes and its role in holding back the transition to clean and safe industries.

The immediate end to the proposed expansions of coal mining in NSW is required, with rejection of the 18 projects in the NSW planning system. The relevant government policy, the Strategic Statement on Coal and Gas Mining & Exploration, should be suspended.

Also important is requiring existing coal mining operations to reduce their emissions before 2030. As a first step coal mines should be required to cut the methane emissions from their operations. Methane emitted into the atmosphere during mining persists for a shorter time than CO₂, but over the first 20 years it traps about 80 times as much heat as CO₂.

Strategies the corporations could be required to adopt include accurate measuring and reporting of methane emissions, capturing and using the methane and not venting and flaring it except in emergencies.

CO₂ emissions from coal and gas mining operations must also be reduced because they remain in the atmosphere for hundreds to thousands of years, locking in long term atmospheric impacts.

Sydney Knitting Nannas further calls on the Committee to give due consideration to:

- Scope 3 emissions of the NSW fossil fuel sector, specifically those arising from export of coal. These emissions from NSW coal exports impact on NSW citizens through their contribution to global warming and must be considered in the assessment of all coal mining projects. This was affirmed in the landmark judgement by the NSW Court of Appeal in the recent case DAMSHEG vs MACH Energy, as Committee members would be aware. No matter where emissions are combusted they increase the risks of climate change impacts for the people of NSW.

- Furthermore, all emissions from NSW coal extraction undermines Australia's responsibility under the Paris Agreement to protect and support developing nations (including in particular our near neighbours in the Pacific) from climate change impacts.
- The use of carbon credits needs to be critically considered. Schemes which allow for the "offsetting" of greenhouse gas emissions should not be accepted in lieu of real reductions in emissions from fossil fuel mining and use.
- Also important is the adoption of a co-ordinated whole of government approach. Achieving NSW emissions targets requires much better co-ordination between parts of government and across different policies than we have seen to date. Unco-ordinated approaches, for example with respect to the Energy from Waste policy, must end. Energy from waste incineration developments in the regions as a solution to the looming crisis in disposal of Sydney's waste would put the state's climate targets at further risk.
We need coherent policies and actions that ensure that consideration of the impacts of NSW greenhouse emissions is embedded in all policies and regulatory processes.

Strong action by the government to reduce emissions from the fossil fuel sector will go a long way towards enabling the state to meet its commitments set out in the Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act.

We ask that the committee include in its work consideration of the social and health impacts of fossil fuel mining as well as the emissions it produces.

In particular we refer you to research by the Social Impacts Alliance in 2024 - Social Impact Assessment in NSW: Community Sacrifice for Coal and Gas.

https://assets.nationbuilder.com/lockthegate/pages/15558/attachments/original/1738207828/Social_Impacts_Alliance_-_Community_Sacrifice_for_Coal_and_Gas_-_Digital_%282%29.pdf

The case studies on coal communities detailed in this report deserve your attention in addition to the consideration of the direct and indirect economic costs of fossil fuel mining. We also note that the Alliance made recommendations for changes to the Social Impacts Assessment processes used by the Department of Planning. The guidelines have very recently been revised by the Department, but they do not include revisions related to climate change impacts on communities.

1. Sydney Knitting Nannas & Friends are a grass roots community group working to protect the earth, sea and sky for the benefit of future generations.