

Submission on RETIREMENT OF COAL FIRED POWER STATIONS 10th Nov 2016

To Senate Inquiry

In 1985 a Commission of Inquiry (1) was held in NSW regarding expansion of coal fired power stations. There were 82 submissions forwarded and many from eminent people in Australia in science and engineering. Many advised of new alternative ways of producing more efficient power from oncoming technologies such as co-generation, emerging solar etc.(2) Most of those studies were not followed up with exhaustive analysis by the NSW Government and so much was lost in bringing in expertise from around Australia.

Locally we highlighted the undeniable fact of cumulative air pollution from three operative power plants located in a tight radius around Lake Macquarie/Lake Munmorah region between Sydney and Newcastle. The community produced documentation that sulphur dioxide was at critical levels(3) and also produced evidence from local doctors of asthma and bronchitis issues elevated in the community averaging 30% greater than the national average.(4)

Subsequently in NSW the Commission found that two more projected power stations known as Mardi and Olney, planned by the Elec. Commission of NSW on the coast (in close formation to those mentioned above) were not necessary.

The important issue is that the pollution argument put forward elicited widespread front page news throughout Australia (October 31st,1985)citing the need to resolve cumulative pollution problems in local populations.(refer Syd .Morning Herald,Courier-Mail ,Melb. Age etc)

It is undeniable in these times to note that coal fired power cannot achieve anything more than about 38% efficiency. The world had moved on and so we must abandon such inefficiency as quickly as possible. Combined with the burgeoning issue of Climate Change internationally it is incumbent upon all legislators and senate inquirers to move forward to achieve targets agreed to by all countries of the world.

It is estimated that the annual costs of associated health from coal fired power in NSW is around \$600 Million per annum (5). An incisive study at the highest level of government and health officials in Australia is still denied in this regard, now more than 30 years after the national exposure mentioned above in which I was personally involved in unearthing local documentation.

Communities in Australia whose health suffers directly from the effects of burning coal have never been given the chance of knowing medical details of that exposure. It is high time that transparency be put on the agenda in this regard and that the new age of knowledge in which we operate tells the bare truth and what may be done to end it.

The vast amounts of emissions from generators such as the 45,000 tonnes of oxides of Nitrogen,45,000 tonnes of sulphur dioxide,1000 tonnes of hydrochloric acid and tonnes of fluoride, ammonia, sulphuric acid, boron and compounds and combinations of heavy metals EACH YEAR emitted by a station such as Eraring (2006 figures) must be wound down.(6)

The Australian Government must give more incentive to renewable energy agencies and companies and more genuine concession to home owners to quickly convert to produce rooftop solar and make mandatory legislature to embody solar on every new building, commercial or domestic. There is at hand a solution but it requires a scale commensurate with the wind down of coal fired power. Incentives also for those people transitioning from the power sector to renewable industry in Australia.

I support those other agencies who are submitting to this Inquiry who offer alternatives and to the orderly winding down of coal generators. To not move forward or to not make significant change to the status quo takes us back again 30 years to the same experience of Government inaction following vital input from the scientific/engineering expertise within our midst.

Thank you in anticipation of firm and robust change as a result of this Inquiry

Yours faithfully

Michael A. Campbell OAM

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1. Commission of Inquiry into Electricity Generation Planning in NSW (NSW Govt Nov 1985)
2. Ibid. Discussion Paper/Summary of Submissions
3. The Contribution of Industrial Fossil Fuel Use to Groundlevel Sulphur Dioxide Concentrations in the Lower Hunter Region, (Bridgeman, Chambers and Kalma, Uni. Of Newcastle Board of Environmental Studies Research Paper No 8, August 1983)
4. Written submission by Drs J.R. Phillips, J.E. Vaughan, G.I. Whyte, Queens Road, Munmorah 13/8/1985. (Copy available from this author)
5. Climate and Health Alliance Australia
6. National Pollution Inventory (2006)