FUTURECOAL
The Global Alliance for Sustainable Coal

ADDENDUM - Select Committee on Information Integrity on Climate Change and Energy – 11 Sep 2025

A FutureCoal submission to the :

Select Committee on Information Integrity on Climate Change and Energy
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

climateintegrity.sen@aph.gov.au

FutureCoal welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Committee's important work on information integrity in climate and energy policy from the perspective of an international energy organisation.

A persistent challenge in this area is the dominance of opinion editorials and commentary from anti-fossil fuel advocates, which often show cognitive bias against the rapid phase-out of coal. These narratives, while emotionally charged, are frequently unbalanced and overlook significant advances in modern coal technologies and responsible business practices that can address many of the environmental and social concerns historically linked to coal use.

Dismissing these advancements as a "clean coal myth" reflects a narrow reliance on outdated assumptions and legacy impacts rather than an objective assessment of current evidence and solutions. A lack of willingness to engage constructively with technological progress and industry initiatives means that entrenched opinions from vested-interest groups can block viable pathways to reducing emissions, ensuring energy security, and maintaining economic stability.

Prejudice against fossil fuel companies should not, and must not, underpin the design of a national energy system upon which entire economies and societies depend. This year, FutureCoal launched the "Fund Fair. Fund Equal" campaign, urging global financial leaders to apply consistent financing principles across all energy sources, including thermal coal. The initiative aims to ensure decision-makers are guided by facts and science, enabling this vital resource to serve global communities reliably, affordably, and with a lower environmental footprint. ‘

FUTURECOAL
The Global Alliance for Sustainable Coal

Critics often dismiss these efforts as "spin," but such labels overlook the Sustainable Coal Stewardship (SCS) framework (see Figure 1), which demonstrates how coal can be responsibly integrated into cleaner energy systems. Let us briefly introduce SCS in its three pillars:

- **Pre-combustion**: advanced mining technologies, land rehabilitation, and resource efficiency in extraction and supply logistics.
- **Combustion:** Advanced abatement technologies such as carbon capture and storage (CCS), high-efficiency low-emissions (HELE) systems, coal gasification, and biomass co-firing, emissions from coal activities can be reduced by up to 99%.
- **Beyond combustion**: new market opportunities for transforming (not combusting) coal to create industrial products, critical minerals, hydrocarbons, chemicals for plastics, agricultural applications, and advanced carbon materials.

Figure 1 FutureCoals' Sustainable Coal Stewardship framework for the coal value chain

Technologies such as high-efficiency, low-emission (HELE) plants and carbon capture, utilisation, and storage (CCUS) have already achieved significant reductions in pollutants and CO_2 emissions where deployed.

While some argue that CCUS is not commercially viable at scale, the reality is more nuanced: projects in North America (Boundary Dam and Petra Nova), China, and the Middle East continue to operate successfully, and new investments are accelerating as governments and industries recognise the need for diverse decarbonization pathways. To label this as a "failed" technology ignores both progress and potential. Critics of carbon capture and storage (CCS) often focus narrowly on whether projects have met their full performance targets, rather than acknowledging the substantial strides made in just the past decade. Compared to ten years ago, CCS technology has advanced substantially, delivering meaningful emissions reductions and proving its role as a viable pathway for decarbonisation.

Yet, while all energy systems can underperform — as seen in Europe, where hydro, wind, and solar shortfalls and overproduction adversely disrupt electricity supply when regularly mismatched with society's demands— it is primarily CCS and fossil-related technologies that face disproportionate scrutiny.

This selective criticism is then amplified as a convenient narrative by anti-fossil fuel groups, ignoring the fact that all energy systems face challenges. Still, only some are held to impossible standards in public debate. Equally, portraying coal as a "dying industry" is misleading. In countries like South Africa, India, and much of Asia, coal underpins energy security, industrial competitiveness, and employment. For these economies, coal's reliability as dispatchable baseload power remains essential, especially as renewable integration challenges underline the importance of balancing, storage, and backup capacity.

The transition from horse to car analogy often used by critics oversimplifies today's energy transition. Unlike horses, coal is not being replaced by a single disruptive technology, but instead by several technologies that are less productive and take several steps backwards in terms of providing affordable, resilient and reliable electricity supplies to the end user (please see previous submission) – such analogies cannot stand the test of reality.

The SCS framework offers a pathway to achieve these goals without sacrificing economic growth or energy access. The global conversation on energy must therefore be rooted in clarity, transparency, and factual accuracy.

FutureCoal's contribution is not to deny these challenges, but to demonstrate modern coal solutions that combine environmental responsibility with economic necessity. Far from being "spin," Sustainable Coal Stewardship is a framework to ensure coal continues to evolve, supporting both global climate goals and the urgent need for secure, affordable energy.