

3 November 2022

Future Sooner is a community group located on the Central Coast. We campaign to promote a clean energy future for the people of the Central Coast and Lake Macquarie.

This includes: reducing the health damage caused by fossil fuels, preventing coal-fired power stations from receiving rolling exemptions to pollute over NSW emission standards; increasing and fast-tracking the adoption of renewable energy, and heading off catastrophic climate change.

### **Our response to the NSW Environment Protection Authority Draft Climate Action Plan.**

Future Sooner congratulates the EPA's resolution to take this important step to start regulating greenhouse gas emissions as pollutants.

However, our analysis of this Draft Action Plan is that it is more a catchup than a plan of action.

The process outlined in the Plan uses language such as "monitor and report", "consider how to reduce emissions" and "regularly discuss."

The Draft Plan indicates that the EPA appears to have recognised the reality of Climate Change and the devastating effects it has had, and continues to have, on the health of communities and their environment.

However, there is no sense of urgency. In fact, the first two years of this Plan is mostly dedicated to *research, monitoring and reporting*. This is incredible given that we have only seven years left to reach our 43% emission reduction target.

Future Sooner has seen the devastation on the Central Coast environment with the recent fish kills in Lake Macquarie from the ash dams at Vales Point and Eraring leaking into the lake.

Future Sooner has enough health evidence on the pollutants from coal-fired power stations alone for the EPA to move beyond the stage of merely monitoring and reporting. These include asthma in children and cancer clusters.

There is no time to waste. The EPA must move fast and immediately put in place actions to mitigate the impacts of pollution on our health, our environment and the effects of catastrophic climate change.

### **The EPA should:**

- Immediately arrange to take carbon emissions into account in all approvals.
- Bring NSW emissions standards in line with those of Europe, USA and Japan
- Immediately refuse exemption licences for coal-fired power stations to pollute over NSW emissions standards.
- Use its existing powers to block all developments that will increase emissions, such as coal mines, gas and coal-fired power stations, fracking, and the use of biomass for electricity
- Since the Paris Agreement, the NSW Government has approved 26 new or expanded fossil fuel projects. The EPA's responsibility must be extended to prevent the approval of further such projects even if those projects are given Critical Infrastructure status by the Independent Planning Commission (IPC)
- Deliver strong and consistent guidelines to the (IPC) to meet the national commitment to the Paris agreement.
- Include in any decision, its legal obligation to "protect the community and environment from harm, including that caused by Climate Change." as per the NSW Land & Environment Court ruling in August 2021
- Include the impacts of poisonous emissions on the health of residents in any decision as per NSW EPA chief executive Tony Chappel comments in the *AFR Weekend* (28/10/2022) regarding the EPA's decision to decrease the Vales Point exemption licence to two-years, that it was also to reduce emissions to support community and environmental health

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