



We are a community group dedicated to raising awareness about all threats to The Great Barrier Reef and building support for better reef protection.

08.11.16

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100 Parliament House Canberra ACT 2600
Sent by email only to: ec.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Members

Re: Submission on Retirement Of Coal Fired Power Stations

Whitsunday Residents Against Dumping (WRAD) thank you for the opportunity to provide comments to the committee on the Retirement Of Coal Fired Power Stations.

Whitsunday Residents Against Dumping (WRAD) are an Airlie Beach based community group working to ensure better protection and health outcomes for our Great Barrier Reef (GBR). A healthy reef means coastal Queensland communities such as ours have a healthy economy. We are however, also concerned about environmental outcomes for our land and water, our flora and fauna, and our landholders, indigenous communities, as well as health outcomes and future job opportunities for those who work in the coal industry. Therefore, we are concerned about the continuing use of coal to generate our electricity and we understand the need for a swift transition to renewable energy to protect our Great Barrier Reef (GBR), and indeed our entire environment as well as human health.

This year the GBR suffered the worst coral bleaching event ever recorded, with 93% of all reefs affected. The northern section of the GBR – formerly the most pristine part of the Reef and some of the most magnificent reefs in the entire world - suffered the most, with 50-80% coral mortality recorded in many areas. These figures are provided by Professor Terry Hughes, the Director of the Australian Research Council's Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies, in the findings of the Australian National Coral Bleaching Taskforce following the 2016 mass bleaching event. Scientists are also united in pointing out that manmade climate change contributed to the severity of this event, as we are pumping far too much carbon dioxide into the earth's atmosphere. Scientists also confirm that the burning of coal in coal fired power stations is a major contributor to climate change and the most important reason to retire all coal fired power stations.

WRAD support the retirement of coal fired power stations for a number of reasons:

- **To maintain a healthy, resilient, vibrant Great Barrier Reef**

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority – the federal body charged with managing the GBR Marine Park - points out that climate change is the greatest threat facing our GBR, so the best way for us to protect the health of the reef is to retire coal fired power stations.



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- **To reduce emissions**

We need to take urgent action to address climate change that is already adversely affecting Australia, as substantiated by The Climate Council Report, so we must urgently reduce our emissions. To limit global temperature increases to 2 degrees or less, we must change the way we generate electricity. We must close inefficient, carbon emitting coal fired power stations and replace them with renewable energy that is emissions free.

- **A coherent national strategy that ensures smooth, rapid transition from coal generated power**

To navigate this complex issue requires coordination across many levels of government, many different agencies, regulators and stakeholders to ensure an efficient, transparent and fair transition. We must have a national plan. Transition is already happening and without a suitable strategy regional communities, like Victoria's Latrobe Valley, are suffering unnecessary chaos and hardship.

- **Community and workers**

Coal fired power stations are one of the leading sources of toxic pollution that puts human health at risk, another reason we must rapidly retire them. The federal government must include in its plan fair support for communities and workers affected by coal fired power plants closures, and prioritise jobs for former coal plant workers. We must have a national plan to effectively achieve this. These costs should not be born entirely by taxpayers, but by the companies that profited from polluting and pumping carbon dioxide into our atmosphere for many years. These companies must be made to pay for support plans for communities as well as site rehabilitation costs.

- **Accelerating the uptake of clean energy technologies**

To encourage this and support the development of new technologies, we must create an attractive sustainable investment environment for clean energies. This requires dependable government funding for research and development and funding assistance through grants, concessional financing, or equity investment for demonstration projects and emerging technologies.

A just transition is urgently required and this is not a decision for future generations. Change is happening now. Our only choice is how we manage this change. We call on our federal government to lead a national energy transition plan to shift Australia to clean energy before 2050, or sooner, and create a future where everyone can thrive.

Yours sincerely

Sandra Williams



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Director