

**PAC Witness Statement in Opposition to T4 Coal Loader
August 2014**

Carrie Jacobi, President, Lake Macquarie Teachers Association

Thank you, Commissioners, for giving me the opportunity to speak here today.

My name is Carrie Jacobi. I speak to you on behalf of the Lake Macquarie Teachers Association, but I also happen to live about 500 metres from the coal rail corridor and the coal stockpiles near the harbour, and my children attended a public school a similar distance away.

Apart from being a teacher, I am a mother, a grandmother and an active community member.

We have a situation in Newcastle and the Hunter that is really unconscionable.

Were the plans of Port Waratah Coal Services to build a fourth coal terminal for the port of Newcastle to go ahead, we would see more than half again the amount of coal exported from the port, and eventually more than double from what is already the largest coal export port in the world.

Areas around the coal terminals and coal rail corridors, including the big stock piles, near where the proposed terminal (T4) is likely to go, have been found to be exposed to elevated levels of particulate pollution above recognised standards.

You will all be aware of the scandal involving the government's commissioned report into particulate pollution from coal trains.

18 of the 21 findings from the original report submitted were altered at the eleventh hour before being released to the public - effectively

changing the findings from identifying high impact to saying there was minimal impact.

In response to this, the community did their own tests.

In the suburb where I live, and where my children attended the local public school, the levels of particulate pollution exceeded the standards on 5 out of the seven days of testing.

There is plenty of anecdotal evidence of this as well. For instance, every few months I clean the inside of my windows and when I do, the cloth becomes black with each window.

Last year, the cloth with which I cleaned the inside of one window was admitted as evidence by the Senate Inquiry into Air Quality. It was a white cloth before cleaning and was black from just one window.

Other residents talk about having to clean the outside of their homes on a weekly if not daily basis to get the black dust off outdoor furniture and walls.

For years we have been hearing of increased rates of asthma and other respiratory illnesses in children who live in and near the coal fields and rail corridor.

According to the Port Waratah assessment documents there are 42,000 coal train trips per year, servicing 35 coal mines, in the Hunter Valley alone.

Half of these trips are with empty wagons heading back to the mines to collect more coal.

Evidence suggests that empty wagons are generating as much, if not more, than loaded wagons

These trains use 2 to 3 locomotives, and we understand that these locomotives are using off-road diesel (otherwise known as dirty diesel) – a known carcinogen, and without any apparent emissions control.

This is the current situation, and the T4 terminal is proposing to increase the volume of coal transported through the valley & the port by at least 50%.

This would mean more than 77,000 coal train trips.

There are about 200 schools (public and private, primary, high and special schools) along the rail corridors from the Hunter Valley and along the west side of Lake Macquarie to the port of Newcastle.

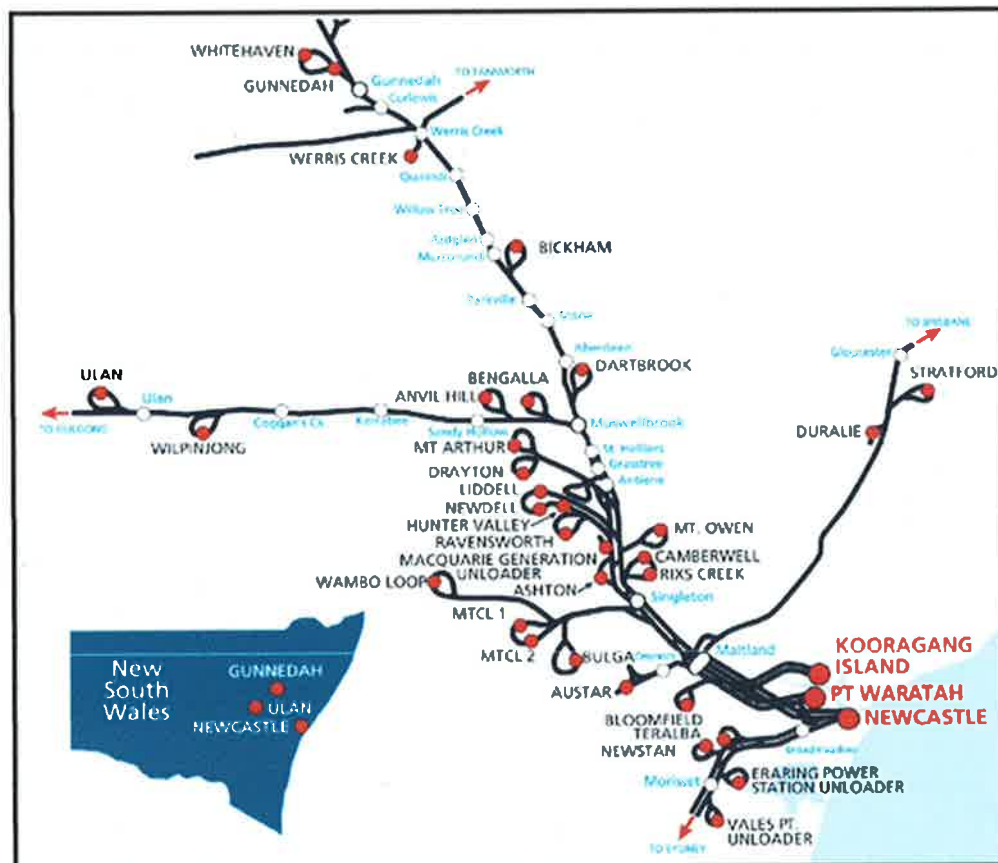


Figure 3: Hunter Valley Coal Chain (Source: Hunter Valley Coal Chain Coordinator)

Attending these schools are more than 23,000 children, and a couple of thousand teachers. And that is just in the suburbs along the coal rail corridors.

Of those 200 schools, around 120 are public schools. The significance of that is that children attending the state's public schools generally live in the vicinity of the school, and therefore are living in the vicinity of the coal rail corridor.

That means that these children are exposed to elevated coal dust and diesel pollution for the greater part of every day and night.

Coal dust, in fact, has been found as far afield as Tea Gardens which is nowhere near the coal corridor.

Tests reveal coal dust at Tea Gardens

By MATTHEW KELLY Environment Reporter Jan. 20, 2013, 10:39 p.m.



DRIFTING: Jennie Perkins of Tea Gardens believes coal dust on her verandah is from mines at least 40 kilometres away. Pictures: Dean Osland

Unfortunately, no studies have been done on the spread of fine particulate pollution or their cumulative impacts.

If we were to include all of the schools in the Hunter Valley and surrounds (like Port Stephens and western Sydney from which coal is

also transported to Newcastle Port), the numbers that I gave you would be much greater.

Coal dust is having a direct impact on the health and wellbeing of those students.

In 2012, the Health and Sustainability Unit at the University of Sydney wrote an article on the Health and Social Harms of Coal Mining in Local Communities which state that children and infants in coal mining communities have been found to have “increased respiratory symptoms including wheeze, cough and absence from school with respiratory symptoms”.

They also found “high levels of heavy metals such as lead and cadmium.”

As teachers we are seeing the effects of respiratory illnesses on the students – children needing asthma puffers and inhibitors, having days off school or having to miss out on activities due to asthma.

Children seem more susceptible to chest infections and prolonged coughs.

Nor have there been any comprehensive studies on the health impacts on coal affected communities, despite repeated calls, for decades, for such a study because of cancer clusters, respiratory illnesses, cleft palates, and heart and kidney disease.

Despite calls for action, government agencies have not even required basic preventative measures such as covering and washing the coal wagons and covering the stock piles.

We have a situation currently that includes inadequate monitoring, community monitoring that demonstrates companies are exceeding particulate pollution on a grand scale, compromised health in

children and adults living in areas affected by particulate pollution, and...

Despite all this, governments and the coal companies are going full steam ahead to increase and eventually double the amount of coal that is already causing these sort of problems and stress.

To borrow a phrase from a source that every primary school student and teacher would know: they are determined to bigger and bigger and bigger it. (Thanks, Dr Suess.)

If T4 goes ahead it will mean:

More Coal Dust: stockpiles would total almost 10km in length and be more than 20m high and uncovered.

More Coal Trains: An extra 30-50 coal trains per day would be needed to deliver coal to T4.

More Coal Mines: You can't increase the exports without increasing the mining. T4 will need 10-20 new mines to supply its coal.

Expansion of mining into and taking over the township of Bulga, into the Liverpool Plains – some of Australia's best farming lands, the Leard State Forest where there are 34 endangered species, and where they will clear over 5000 hectares of its 8000 hectare total.

Lost Biodiversity: The construction of T4 (not to mention the mines from which its coal would be extracted) threaten critical habitat for globally migrating birds and is adjacent to internationally recognised, and supposedly protected, wetlands.

More Global Warming: It's absurd and illogical that the proponent and the Department of Planning argue that it's somehow okay to take into account the role of T4 as part of an integrated set of

economic and logistical relationships, but to dismiss arguments that it is also, and much more fundamentally, part of an integrated biosphere.

We cannot and must not ignore the fact that the very purpose of exporting this coal is to burn it.

The greenhouse pollution from coal shipped from T4, if it goes ahead, would be more than 170 megatonnes per year – equivalent to a third of Australia's total greenhouse emissions.

The organisation '350' claims that if T4 were a country, it would be the World's 30th biggest emitter of greenhouse gases.

On May 31, the New South Wales Teachers Federation Council meeting unanimously agreed to oppose the construction of the fourth coal terminal and call on the government to require the covering and washing of coal wagons and stockpiles.

This follows the footsteps of other unions also interested in the health and wellbeing of our communities, such as the Midwife's Association.

As a teacher, and President of the Lake Macquarie Teachers Association, I am interested in the safety and welfare of children and communities.

I call on you to reject the application for the fourth (and largest) coal loader.

We want a future for our children that is full of health and wellbeing, not one that will depend on an industry that will detrimentally affect their quality of life for decades to come.