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## **SUBMISSION ON THE T4 PREFERRED PROJECT REPORT**

**BY: AMANDA MACOKATIC 22.11.13**

I believe that a fourth coal terminal in the Port of Newcastle is not warranted for many different reasons.

Coal dust is bad for the environment and for human health. Workers at Kooragang Island possess an increased cancer rate compared to other occupations(1). This is no coincidence.

Coal is a poor investment that many countries are now moving away from. At the recent climate summit held in Warsaw just this week, the United Kingdom stated that they are going to be ceasing international funding for coal related projects. Also at this summit, five Nordic countries announced that they would be calling for an end to coal projects investment (2). Many developed countries are now moving away from investments in and use of coal as an energy resource.

With Australia already holding the title of being the world's largest exporter of coal and as Newcastle Port is already one of the largest coal export ports in the world (3), the need for further expansion seems highly questionable.

Coal is a fossil fuel that is going to soon become extinct as the world moves towards cleaner, greener, renewable energy sources. Why would Newcastle want to expand its port to double in size when coal is such a toxic substance to be trading in? Why wouldn't Novocastrians want to be moving toward cleaner energy sources? This money could be used to fund these more environmentally-friendly and sustainable type projects.

From the perspective of a person who has been researching energy for many years now, [REDACTED] Executive Director, Michael Brune has stated "Despite the coal industry's best efforts, there is a growing, global consensus to stop wasting public money on dirty coal that sickens communities, pollutes our air and water, and threatens our children's future,"(2).

Finally, as per Article 25 of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the right to an adequate living standard(4) is just one of the basic human rights which would be highly compromised if this proposal were to go ahead. Living in a town full of coal dust which causes cancer and other health problems for inhabitants of our community for now and for many years to come, is something which I personally will not stand for!

Regards,

**Amanda Macokatic**

[REDACTED]

**References:**

1. <http://www.smh.com.au/environment/kooragang--coal-workers-face-increased-cancer-risk-study-20120720-22e2v.html>
2. <http://ecowatch.com/2013/11/20/uk-announces-end-public-financing-coal/>
3. <http://www.newportcorp.com.au/site/index.cfm?display=111627>
4. <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml#a25>

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#### T4 Determination PAC Speech

#### By Amanda Macokatic on behalf of The Wilderness Society 13.7.15

Commissioners, Traditional Owners, audience.

I'd like to pay my respects to the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today, the Awabakal and Worimi people.

I stand with the 90% of the people that will be speaking against this project.

My name is Amanda Macokatic and today I am speaking on behalf of the Wilderness Society who (as stated at the first public hearing) are firmly opposed to this project on many levels.

But first, a brief introduction on who I am.

I am a proud Novocastrian and although my parents are Croatian, I was born and raised here. My dad is a retired coal train driver who drove coal around for 30 years. I attended Newcastle University where I gained a Bachelor of Commerce degree, and after being an Accountant for six years (I was always good at math...) I decided it was time to follow more meaningful pursuits (no judgement to any accountants in the room today); which landed me where I am today, working for The Wilderness Society as a Community Campaigner.

**I believe that the time has come for taking positive action to preserve what is left of our natural environment for future generations.**

Before getting into the nitty gritty of my arguments today, I'd just like to tell you a little story...

Most of my life I have been a resident of [REDACTED] and so the everyday pollution I'd see mainly consisted of McDonalds wrappers along the Pacific highway, but every few weeks or so my dad (on his rare days off) would take us for a massive bike ride into [REDACTED] to visit my grandparents who lived in a modest cottage there. The ride, for me as a young girl between the ages of 5 and 15, was quite gruelling, but I loved it so much because it was something fun I was doing with my dad. But one thing I noticed, was when we reached [REDACTED] the air always seemed to get dirtier the closer we got to Babas and Didas. Not just car pollution, but I felt like it got dustier. And when we'd finally reach my Baba and Dida's house, I always remember the walk up their side path, and I remember looking at the peach coloured weatherboards of the house as I walked up, and seeing the dust evenly coated on them almost like icing sugar, but black, so as a young girl, I'd think it was great fun my finger along the boards and draw pictures in the dust, but my dad always would yell at me to say "don't touch that Amanda, it's dirty"... I thought dad was being overly mean at the time, but looking back it all, I realise he would have very well known, working in the coal industry, just how toxic that black dust actually was. And so he was just trying to protect me, as parents do.

PROTECTION. It could be said that that's what our lives are all about. We were born because our parents didn't use it, and we will die because of the things we weren't protected from during our life... the impacts of a car crash, the trans fats in fast foods, the stresses of society, and sadly, for many residents of this town (including my grandfather, may he rest in peace) the carcinogens in our atmosphere.



**The time for cleaning up this city is NOW, Commissioners.**

#### BIODIVERSITY

In my first presentation last August, I made the following points to the Commission:

- We (The Wilderness Society) felt strongly that T4 would have **destructive impacts on our internationally significant wetlands.**
- We felt strongly that the **21 threatened species that use the proposed site would be under serious threat** with their critical habitat being destroyed.
- We felt strongly that T4 would **destroy the critical habitat for globally migrating bird species.**
- We felt strongly that T4 **could mean the regional extinction of the Green and Golden Bell Frog.**
- We felt strongly that it is the **cumulative impacts of what has already been cleared and polluted that is of major concern.** We have an international obligation to protect and enhance these Ramsar listed wetland environments, not to cause yet more industrialisation. A number of other threatened and vulnerable species have also been recorded in and around the proposed project area and T4 would be putting them all at further, increased risk.
- We felt strongly that the **offsets that PWCS have purchased are inadequate on environmental grounds.** The **Environmental Assessment of the T4 Project** admits that **none of the migratory shorebirds that will be impacted by the development were sighted on the offset site,** and further, that **mangrove habitat on the offset site is not mature enough to provide suitable roosting habitat for migratory shorebirds.** And also, we pointed out how the EA concedes that **the use of the site at Tomago as an offset will likely negatively affect the only threatened species found on the offset site, the Eastern Grass Owl.**
- We felt strongly, that T4 **would create a significant negative contribution towards climate change.**
- We felt strongly that **T4 would increase the likelihood of new mines being dug in the rest of the state, further harming biodiversity and threatened species, adding to climate warming and putting our national food security, in places like the Liverpool plains area at severe risk.**
- Finally, we felt strongly that the **EPBC (Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation) Act 1999 Environmental Offsets Policy be revised to provide greater guidance on developments in which offsets are unacceptable including a list of 'red flag' areas, such as world heritage and critically endangered ecological communities and species, AS did the Senate Reference Committee (see recommendation # 6).**

**Commissioners, the time for cleaning up this city is NOW.**



In response to ours and the rest of the community's concerns in August last year, you came up with a set of recommendations to the Government, and although you recommended the project be approved, you outlined a set of conditions which the Proponent should adhere to. Although the Wilderness Society is strongly opposed to T4, we acknowledge the reality that may lie before us and so today I wish to draw your attention to some of your previous recommendations which, we believe the Commission should re-enforce.

**PAC Recommendation Number 2 states that the detailed design of the offsets should be prepared in consultation with government agencies, including council.**

Although we believe the offsets in this case are inadequate and in contravention with the Ramsar convention due to the Project being set to damage the ecological character of the Ramsar site, should the PAC accept the offsets as legal, we agree with the PAC's recommendation and go a step further to say that the community should be consulted in the full process of designing the offset site via the means of an independent panel, consisting of an appropriate number of community representatives.

**PAC Recommendation Number 3 states that the Commission recommends a five year approval period, rather than the 10 year timeframe proposed by the Proponent.**

The Government denied this recommendation, apparently due to the fact that the ecological benefit associated with the Brundee site may take 10 years to realise (in their opinion). However, we believe, that that it simply does not matter if it takes 10 years to fully dot the I's and cross the T's on all the paperwork to determine whether or not the work set out for Brundee was effective, we believe that the sooner the Proponent commences this work the better! Surely, anyone with the environment in their best interest, would agree that beginning to remediate a site sooner rather than later is going to be beneficial to the natural environment. The Government's argument here is simply floored.

And also, even with a 10 year timeframe, it's not to say that the Proponent would in fact wait 10 years to commence the Project, they may wish to build it sooner, and if so, is the Government implying here that "no, the Project cannot get built until we see if the Brundee site is actually making a positive impact, and this may take 10 years." Of course they wouldn't. So this point in my view is invalid. Bring back the 5 year approval timeframe and enforce strict conditions on what "commencing works" actually means.

**PAC Recommendation Number 4 stated that the Tomago offset site for migratory birds in particular, should be functioning for a minimum period of 3 years instead of the Commonwealth's recommended one year successful demonstration period, before Construction phase commenced for the project.**

The Government responded by disagreeing due to several factors mainly relating to ambiguity of defining success in part due to international factors. Our view is that the factors for success can be determined, and I am not here today to specify those for you, as I am not an ecologist, however, with appropriate consultation, this would be easily developed. And furthermore, we would go a step further to say that the Commission should stipulate that not only should the offset site be





functioning for a minimum of three years, it should ALSO be demonstrated that at least one successful migratory bird season has occurred on the site.

#### CLOSING STATEMENT

In closing I would like to state my personal opinion that adding to the pollution in this town by building another coal terminal to me seems absurd and I believe Newcastle should be moving towards other industries that have less of an impact on the environment, such as tourism.

**I hope you can take these points on board Commission and remember, the time for cleaning up this city is NOW. Thankyou**

