

I am writing a submission on the two draft policy documents currently on display - the Climate Change Licensee Requirements and the Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Guide for NSW Coal Mines.

I worked all my career in coal mining and live in the Illawarra region, itself a long time mining community. I am very concerned at the inadequacy of the proposed changes. It appears they won't be at all effective in reducing emissions in NSW coal mines, both open cut and underground. Rather than instigating real and profound change in the NSW coal industry, the requirements outlined will, effectively, mean 'business as usual' - being that coal mine operators continue to pay lip service to reducing their business's emissions and focus on maximising profits over the good of the community, country and planet.

1. The Climate Change Licensee Requirements

The document states that there will be no limits on greenhouse gas emissions, through the Environment Protection Licences, in the short term - that these are seen as long-term actions! This is completely unacceptable as the science is very clear that we need action now or our future will be bleak indeed. Even your own expert panel found that *"it will be hard for the EPA to ensure mines actually reduce emissions in the absence of emission limits."*

Enforceable, reviewable limits should be placed on emissions of greenhouse gases, especially methane, from NSW coal mines as a matter of urgency. These should be gross emissions limits that exclude offsets and are consistent with a 1.5 degree of warming pathway.

2. GHG Mitigation Guide for Coal Mines

As with the Licensee Requirements, the Mitigation Guide fails to drive any significant reduction in direct emissions from either methane pollution or diesel emissions in the NSW coal industry *this decade* - as I said 'kicking the can down the road'!

In particular:

The Guide proposes that changes might happen, there is no regulation to ensure change does happen e.g. the EPA may mandate ventilation air methane (VAM) abatement at high-emitting underground coal mines in NSW, but not until July 2030 and then only for mines that will operate beyond July 2032. This means that for the next 5 years there will be no methane emission reduction and after that it will only be for specific longer term mines - this while our world is heating and the companies are profiting on the back of this climate damage.

As to methane emissions from open cut mines, there is no proposed requirement for gas drainage and destruction of methane even though the EPA's own expert panel on this issue recommended '*adding surface mines to the gas drainage and flaring requirements*'. The argument that it will not be cost effective or too onerous on companies is typical of fossil fuel companies crying poor. If they cannot ensure that the actions and emissions from their mine does not adversely effect the environment and the health of the communities, they should not be allowed to operate. Basically, the mines and open cut can continue, for the foreseeable future, to emit methane without consequence (except from the environmental response to our warming world!)

Emissions from diesel engines at coal mines will be allowed to continue as they currently are as there is no requirement for electrification of diesel engines until after 2030 and that is at a

laughable 5%. This certainly sets the bar low and ensures 'business as usual' in NSW while elsewhere in Australia other mining companies are moving from diesel to electricity which is both better for the environment and cost effective (<https://reneweconomy.com.au/gina-rinehart-backed-lithium-mine-achieves-81-pct-renewables-over-last-year-with-wind-solar-and-battery/>)

As if all of these concerns aren't enough, the Guide also allows for companies to claim exemptions for as simple a reason as deciding '*it is not feasible to implement*'. This is a massive loophole which directly mimics the current requirements that measures 'must be reasonable and feasible' which has held back any action for the last 10 years!

The Guide does not contain any guidance on how to constrain the usually very large downstream Scope 3 emissions that occur when coal from mines is burnt in power stations either here in Australia or overseas. This is despite a recent decision by the NSW Court of Appeal in relation to the Mt Pleasant Coal Mine which recognised downstream emissions as within the scope of development assessments. Also the Guide fails to include any requirements for reducing electricity emissions at coal mines (Scope 2 emissions), despite them being the easiest category to reduce by requiring renewable energy to be used. Instead, the Guide merely says that EPA will look at this issue '*later*'.

The Guide needs to be drastically amended to require the following:

- Enforceable requirements that prohibit venting of unabated methane from underground mines and mandate the use of Ventilation Air Methane at the highest-emitting underground mines from 2027 and at other underground mines from mid-2028.
- Mandate pre-drainage of methane at all open cut mines.
- Set an achievable schedule for electrification of vehicles at coal mines that requires at least 50% electrification by 2030 and 70% by 2035 and require all mines to utilise renewable energy for electricity by at least 2030.
- Remove the proposed exemption to allow coal companies to avoid requirements because it will completely undermine the whole Guide and set strong penalties for failure to comply with it.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to comment on these documents and I hope that a review is undertaken to ensure that the EPA drives the change in emission reduction and transition to renewable energy that the NSW coal industry must undertake to meet climate change targets and reduce the risk of reaching 2 degrees warming.

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