

Manager, Climate Change Policy
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6 October 2025

Dear EPA Climate Change Policy Manager,

Submission to NSW EPA – Regarding the three draft policy documents currently on exhibition – the Climate Change Licensee Requirements, the Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Plans and the Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Guide for NSW Coal Mines.

RE Climate Change Licensee Requirements

EPA licensees contribute 50–60% of the greenhouse gas emissions in NSW – and I understand that the approximately 200 EPA's licensees that emit 25,000t or more of CO₂-e of Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions per year, who are targeted by these proposed documents, together emit around 50% of all NSW emissions.

I am really concerned about methane emissions from underground coal mines near where I live – not just what comes out of constructed shaft vents but also what is seeping out of cracks in the ground. From all I read, our NSW and Australian governments do not really have a handle on just how much methane is escaping – but estimates from EMBER / IEA suggest that it is a lot more than currently reported. I feel like this is important context, especially when considering GHG emissions targets (with NSW already not on track to meet ours). So I like the proposed progressive establishment of a regional GHG monitoring network – but please make it fast and ensure that industry pays for it. I have not investigated the Method.8.or.9.for fugitive methane estimation, but whatever happens, can the EPA (rather than industry) do the monitoring and measurement and reporting, rather than industry but with costs covered by industry, so community might have some confidence in the data.

We have known, and coal companies have known, about climate change for many decades now. And our world is not going to stay below 1.5°C warming. So really, there is no excuse for kicking the can down the road any more. EPA needs to impose GHG emissions limits on facilities (and if possible, on proposed developments) via EPLs in the very near term, rather than as a long-term action. There need to be evidence-based GHG emissions limits that do not include offsets and that are set for all 200 operators.

Further, the NSW EPA should ask the Net Zero Commission to establish a specific GHG emissions target for the coal mine sector for 2030 and 2035 that are consistent with a 1.5 degree of warming pathway. These targets should then inform the EPA GHG emissions limits.

At this point I have not read the other two documents, but of course, I am also wondering who will actually enforce GHG emissions limits. There needs to be enforcement and consequences for executives (fines and jail time) for breaching EPLs. Otherwise this is just fluff. I am already aware that

local coal mine operators see penalties are just a cost of doing business. ...Also, please can the EPA do whatever it can to ensure that there are no new coal approvals.

RE Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Guide for Coal Mines

There is no point to this Guide given that it will not lead to any significant abatement of direct GHG emissions from either methane pollution or diesel emissions as coal mines this decade. The IPCC has indicated this is the critical period for avoiding dangerous tipping points – and as I write, some tipping points might already have been crossed. Urgency is not optional.

I am most interested in methane emissions from underground mines – and my reading of this Guide is that the EPA will not mandate VAM abatement until July 2030 and then only for mines that will operate beyond July 2032, (and also only if ‘safe’). This is so frustrating! Given all of these provisos, we really need to ensure no further underground coal mine approvals. ... I am very aware of North Cliff shaft vent 4 that has been spewing methane into our atmosphere for more than 30 years since it should have been rehabilitated – and no effective action by government. Peabody Metropolitan now is proposing a ‘modification’ in which an approved shaft vent it found it did not need for its approved operations, could be shifted to a new location so it might serve intended future operations including first workings also included in the ‘modification’. Please can EPA simply refuse to provide an EPL? ... If the EPA is going to pursue this at all then VAM needs to be mandated at the highest-emitting underground mines from 2027 and at other underground mines from mid-2028 at the latest.

I also notice that the Guide does not require electrification of diesel engines at coal mines. So again no likely reduction of Scope 1 diesel GHG emissions this decade. Why not require electrification of vehicles? Why not 100% electrification by 2030?

The Guide also does not require Scope 2 electricity GHG emissions reductions at coal mines – yet that is relatively easy to abate. Why not have such requirements? Why not a high, say 85% renewable electricity by 2030? There is no ‘later’ time that this will be suitable to consider this.

Also alarmingly, the Guide provides a mechanism whereby a company can seek an exemption from a mitigation measure if it decides ‘it is not feasible to implement’. This is a loophole which I can foresee coal mining corporations exploiting. This exemption should be removed- and the EPA needs to set and enforce strong penalties for failure to comply with strong GHG emissions reductions requirements.

Overall

I have serious concerns about these draft documents. There is a lack of urgency and at least one big loophole. We need urgent change rather than business as usual at NSW coal mines. NSW keeps approving further coal mine developments and at the same time does nothing significant to bring methane emissions down from existing coal mines. Without urgent and strong limits on GHG emissions on coal mines before 2030 and 2035, to line up with NSW climate commitments, then the problem just gets worse.

Thank you for reading my submission,

Deidre Stuart
NSW Resident.

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Climate Change Licensee Requirements <https://hdp-au-prod-app-nswepa-yoursay-files.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/4217/5452/7883/25p4604-proposed-cc-licensee-requirements-for-consultation.pdf>

Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Plans <https://hdp-au-prod-app-nswepa-yoursay-files.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/3117/5452/8011/23p4608-ccmap-proposed-mitigation-requirements-for-consultation.pdf>

Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Guide for NSW Coal Mines <https://hdp-au-prod-app-nswepa-yoursay-files.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/5017/5452/8073/25p4606-proposed-ghg-mitigation-guide-for-nsw-coal-mines.pdf>