

I make this submission in response to the three draft policy documents that are 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.

As a scientist, parent and someone who cares greatly about conserving our natural environment, I find the documents to be utterly inadequate for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in a manner that is consistent with the climate change action urgently required this decade.

Rather than curtailing pollution from coal mines, to meet minimum targets of a 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and 70% by 2035, these documents provide loopholes and delays that will allow NSW coal mines to continue with business as usual.

Against all scientific recommendations, the NSW government continues to approve expansions to coal mines and has done little to reduce methane emissions from existing mines resulting in a predicted **increase** in methane until 2030.

**The Climate Change Licensee Requirements** aim to delay short term action by stating that the EPA will not impose limits on facilities via Environmental Protection Licences in the short term. In fact, the NSW EPA's own expert panel found that *"....the panel's view is that it will be hard for the EPA to ensure mines actually reduce emissions in the absence of emission limits."*

I urge the State government to revise this proposal to include stringent limits on gross greenhouse gas emissions, particularly from methane, which are subject to strict enforcement and review and exclude the use of offsets.

I also recommend that the NSW EPA work with the Net Zero Commission to establish a sectoral target for coal mine emissions reduction to 2030 and 2035 that are consistent with a 1.5 degree of warming pathway. These targets should then drive the limits on emissions included in Environment Protection Licences which increase over time in accordance with the statewide sectoral target.

**The Greenhouse Mitigation Guide for Coal Mines** is not fit for purpose as it will not significantly reduce direct emissions from either methane pollution or diesel emissions within this decade, which is the critical window to avoid catastrophic climate change.

Underground mines: Specifically outrageous is the proposal that ventilation air methane (VAM) abatement at high-emitting underground coal mines in NSW need not be mandated by the EPA until July 2030 and then only for mines that will operate beyond 2032. Also flagged is the delay in resolving uncertainty about VAM abatement safety issues until 2028. This is a case of pushing the ball down the road until it is virtually non-existent! In short, the best case scenario results in very little abatement by 2032, and the worst case scenario is very little at all well beyond 2032 if decisions about 'safety issues' means that VAM abatement will not be required.

Open cut mines: The proposed Guide does NOT require gas drainage and destruction of methane at open cut coal mines, even though the EPA's own expert panel on this issue recommended 'adding surface mines to the gas drainage and flaring requirements'.

The guide fails to address emissions from diesel engines at coal mines. Rather than requiring the electrification of diesel engines at coal mines, it places no pressure on coal miners to reduce Scope 1 diesel GHG emissions this decade. The measures in this guide are based on shifting a percentage of fuel used to low carbon alternatives until 2035, but do not limit total fuel use and are thus likely to result in an increase in diesel emissions.

Other major failings of the Guide include:

Exemptions - The Guide sets out a pathway whereby a company can seek an exemption from a mitigation measure if it decides 'it is not feasible to implement'. This is a massive loophole which directly mimics the current requirements that measures 'must be reasonable and feasible' and continues to delay any action, as has occurred for the past 10 years.

Downstream Scope 3 emissions - The Guide does not contain any guidance on how to constrain the enormous 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 scope of development assessments.

Scope 2 emissions - The Guide fails to include any requirements for reducing electricity generated emissions at coal mines (Scope 2 emissions). The use of renewable energy would make this a practical and relatively simple way to reduce emissions, yet the Guide merely says that EPA will look at this issue 'later'.

My strong recommendation is for the Guide to be revised and include the following:

Strict requirements that prohibit venting of unabated methane from underground mines. Instead, the Guide should mandate the abatement 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 ambitious 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 2030 at the latest.

Remove the proposed exemption to allow coal companies to avoid requirements and set strong penalties for failure to comply with it. Anything less completely undermines the purpose of the Guide to reduce GHG emissions from NSW coal mines.

Thank you,

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