

Submission
No 15

**INQUIRY INTO 2024 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE NET
ZERO COMMISSION**

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

Submission to the NSW Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Net Zero Future Inquiry into the NSW Net Zero Commission's First Annual Report

Date: 13/02/2025

Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the NSW Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Net Zero Future Inquiry into the first Annual Report of the NSW Net Zero Commission (NZC). As an individual deeply concerned about climate change and the future of New South Wales, I welcome the work of the NZC and the Committee in addressing the critical challenges of achieving net zero emissions by 2050.

I have reviewed the NZC's first report and commend its findings, particularly the identification of key issues related to coal and gas expansion, and the urgent need for decisive action to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Below, I address the key points raised by the NZC and provide my thoughts for the NSW Government to consider in its response to the report. I also highlight the critical issue of coal mine expansions in the Mudgee region, which are among the highest-producing mines in NSW and are all proposing to expand.

Key Points and Recommendations

1. Request a Dedicated Report on Coal and Gas Expansion Risks

The NZC has clearly stated that NSW is not on track to meet its legislated GHG targets, and the continued expansion of coal mines poses a significant risk to achieving these goals. I strongly support the NZC's intention to closely examine developments in the resources sector, given the sector's substantial impact on NSW's emissions.

Recommendation:

The NSW Government should request a specific, dedicated report from the NZC on the risks that coal and gas expansions pose to NSW's climate targets. This report should be completed by June 2025 and include advice on a coal sectoral target to drive emissions reduction in the coal sector. In the meantime, approvals of new coal expansions should be paused until such advice has been provided by the NZC.

2. Create a Regulation Under the CCNZF Act

The NZC has highlighted the lack of a policy framework to support shifting the burden of decarbonization from one sector to another. This is particularly concerning given the significant emissions from the coal mining sector and the potential for increased emissions from new coal mine expansions.

Recommendation:

A Regulation under the Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act (CCNZF Act) should be created to place a duty on key planning decision-makers to meet the 2030 and 2035 targets. This Regulation should also require decision-makers to consider downstream emissions in the context of the Paris Agreement's temperature goals, as per the purpose of the Act.

3. Net Zero Commission Advice on Major Coal Mine Expansions

The NZC has expressed concern about the “sizeable pipeline” of coal mine expansion projects currently under assessment by NSW Planning. These expansions could significantly increase emissions, making it even more challenging for NSW to meet its climate targets.

Recommendation:

The Net Zero Commission should be asked to provide specific advice and make recommendations on all proposed major coal mine expansions, as per Section 15(3) of the CCNZF Act. This will ensure that the emissions impact of these projects is fully considered before any approvals are granted.

4. Critical Role of NZC in Reviewing Mudgee Coal Mine Expansions

The Mudgee region is home to three of the highest-producing coal mines in NSW: Yancoal's Moolarben Mine, Glencore's Ulan Mine, and Peabody's Wilpinjong Mine. These mines were the largest producers of coal in NSW for 2023, with Yancoal's Moolarben Mine producing 14.2 million tonnes, Glencore's Ulan Mine producing 11.3 million tonnes, and Peabody's Wilpinjong Mine producing 11.2 million tonnes. Combined, their approvals allow them to produce up to 58 million tonnes per annum (mtpa) until 2038. They are all seeking to expand.

Given the significant contribution of these mines to NSW's GHG emissions, it is critical that the NZC plays a central role in reviewing any expansion applications and the planning decision-making process for these mines. The potential for increased emissions from these expansions must be thoroughly assessed to ensure that NSW can meet its climate targets.

Recommendation:

The NZC should be mandated to review all expansion applications for the Mudgee coal mines (Moolarben, Ulan, and Wilpinjong) and provide specific advice on their emissions impact. The planning decision-making process for these expansions should be transparent and consider the cumulative impact of these projects on NSW's GHG emissions and climate targets.

Conclusion

The findings of the NZC's first report underscore the urgent need for decisive action to address the challenges posed by coal and gas expansion in NSW. The Mudgee coal mines, as the highest-producing mines in the state, represent a critical area of focus for ensuring that NSW meets its climate targets. I urge the NSW Government to take immediate steps to implement the recommendations outlined above, including pausing new coal mine expansions, creating a Regulation under the CCNZF Act, and seeking specific advice from the NZC on major coal projects, particularly those in the Mudgee region.

By taking these actions, NSW can position itself as a leader in the transition to a net zero future, ensuring that the state meets its climate targets and contributes to global efforts to limit temperature rise in line with the Paris Agreement.

Thank you for considering this submission. I look forward to the outcomes of the inquiry and the NSW Government's response to the NZC's report.