

**Submission
No 65**

INQUIRY INTO 2024 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE NET ZERO COMMISSION

Organisation: Geni Energy
Date Received: 12 February 2025

We appreciate the work of the Commission and in providing a report after only six months on the tools!

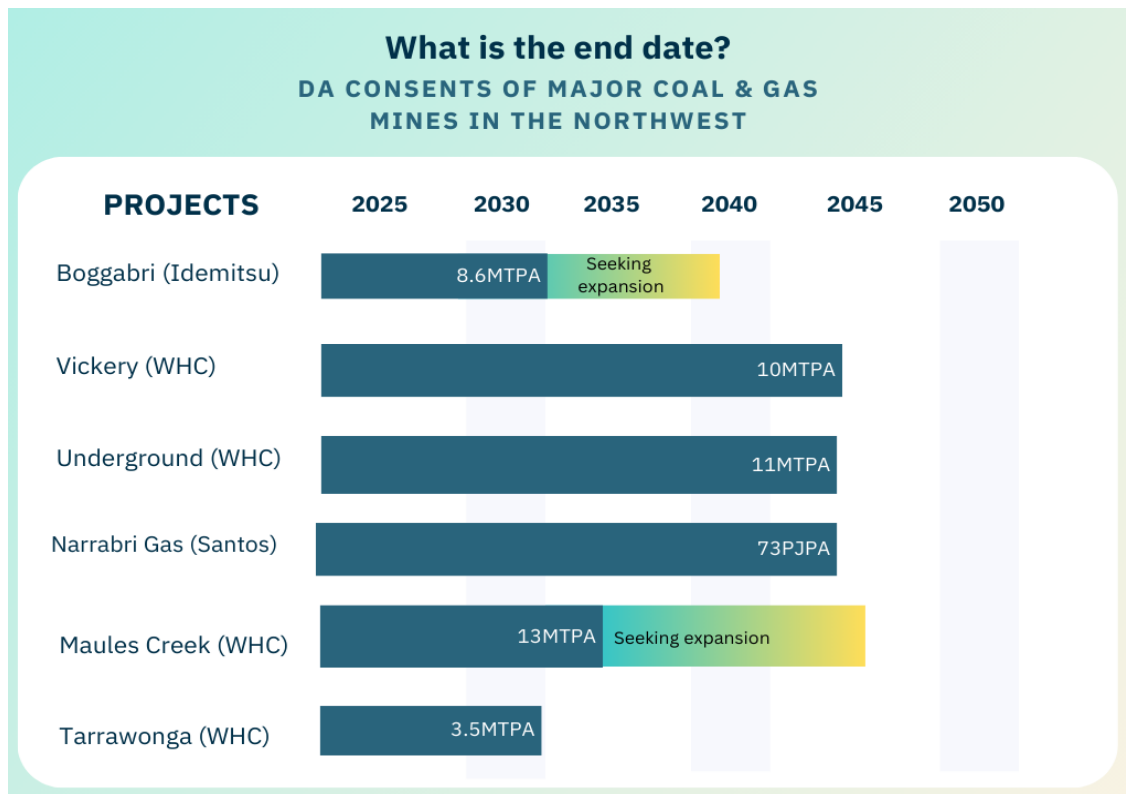
Background

I prepare this submission as the Founder and Managing Director of Geni.Energy which is a not-for-profit organisation seeking to help the northwest region transition away from coal and increase the local benefits from renewable energy. I am a long term Narrabri local, living, working and raising my children here.

The Report Card is Not Good

It is worth noting at the outset that according to the Report from Commission currently NSW is not on track to meet its 2030 emissions reductions targets.

Here in the northwest NSW we see the conundrum clearly. Of our five export coal mines currently operating within 50km of Narrabri, four of them have just received or are currently seeking expansions to go deeper and/or bigger, releasing new coal and new emissions by the millions of tonnes per year. We have a gasfield with an approval from the NSW state government that is planning/hoping to move to production phase to also release millions of tonnes of new emissions every year. These new emissions are not consistent with reducing emissions and meeting lower emissions targets, in fact they are in stark and drastic opposition to that goal.



The image above shows the millions of tonnes of coal per annum that each of the mines are allowed to harvest, through to what years. It also highlights the approval currently sought and the timeframe that this will push these mines (and their emissions) out to.

Particularly worrisome for our region is that the report stated that ***“[a]ny emissions increases associated with extended or expanded projects would require all other sectors to make greater emissions reductions if the state is to meet its emissions reduction targets.”***

In the northwest our two key economic industries are agriculture and mining.

Seemingly unabated expansions to the emissions from coal mining will inevitably place increased pressure on our agricultural industry to make greater reductions. As we know, the land sector and agriculture has absorbed the lion's share of the emissions savings across the state to date anyway. Squeezing more blood out of that stone is neither possible, nor equitable.

There are concerns that rising emissions from the coal sector will inevitably read to more pressure on agriculture to reduce emissions. Agriculture continues to be an important employer in the region, down in numbers due to technology but still a large employer. It is also crucial in terms of food security for Australia which cannot be replaced in any way, compared with an export coal industry that provides jobs at a similar number, however no national security benefits with the majority of benefits flowing to international shareholders and part owners of the mines.

The challenge that faces us to try to mitigate the worst of climate change at this time will have broad ranging and drastic impacts to all of our sectors. Maintaining current coal mines and pausing any new approvals and modifications for expansions is the lowest impact benefit that can be created at this moment. Current levels of employment in mining can be maintained while a locally-relevant transition plan can be implemented.

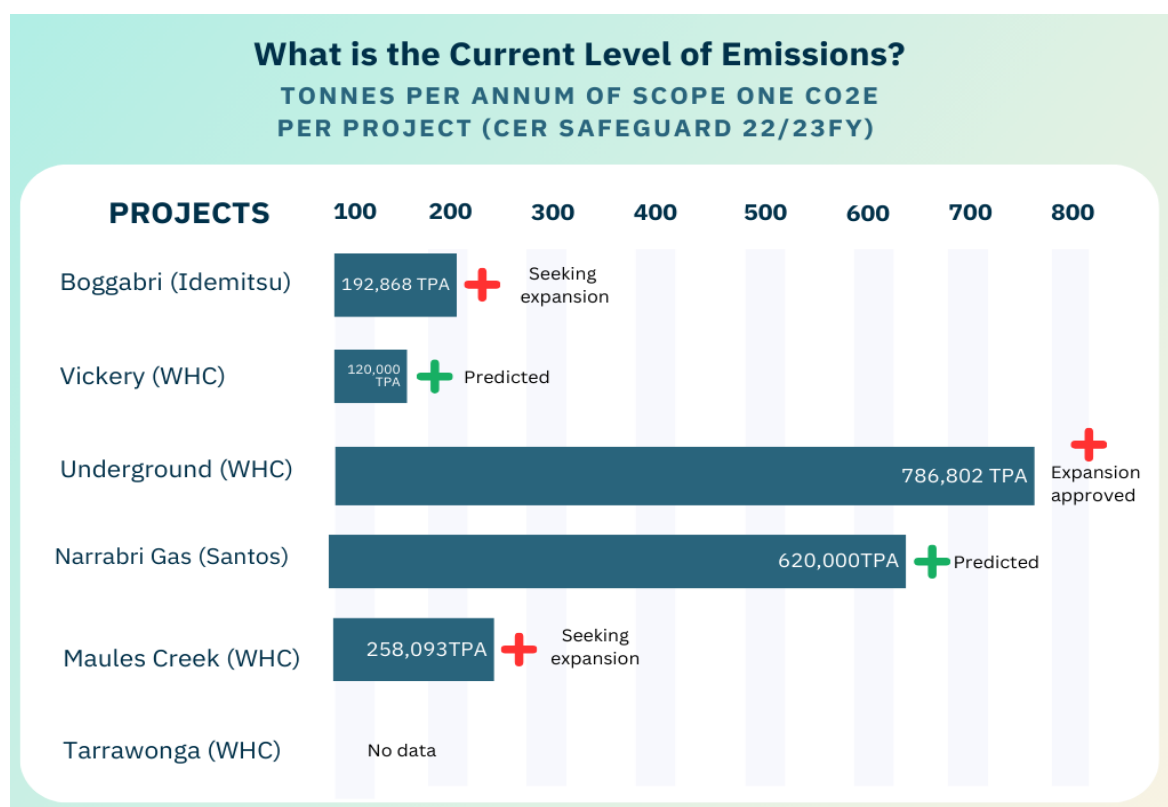
New Emissions already On their Way

Whilst the modelling emissions increases identified in the report mean NSW will not meet its emissions reductions targets, the modelling also fails to recognise the breadth of new emissions from already approved, or soon to be approved mines. Our understanding is that the already approved Boggabri Mod 10 project and the Maules Creek Continuation Project that is seeking approval this year; emissions have also not been included in the Net Zero Emissions Modelling. This yawning gap is even wider than already reported and predicted.

Submission - Sally Hunter, Managing Director, Geni.Energy, Narrabri

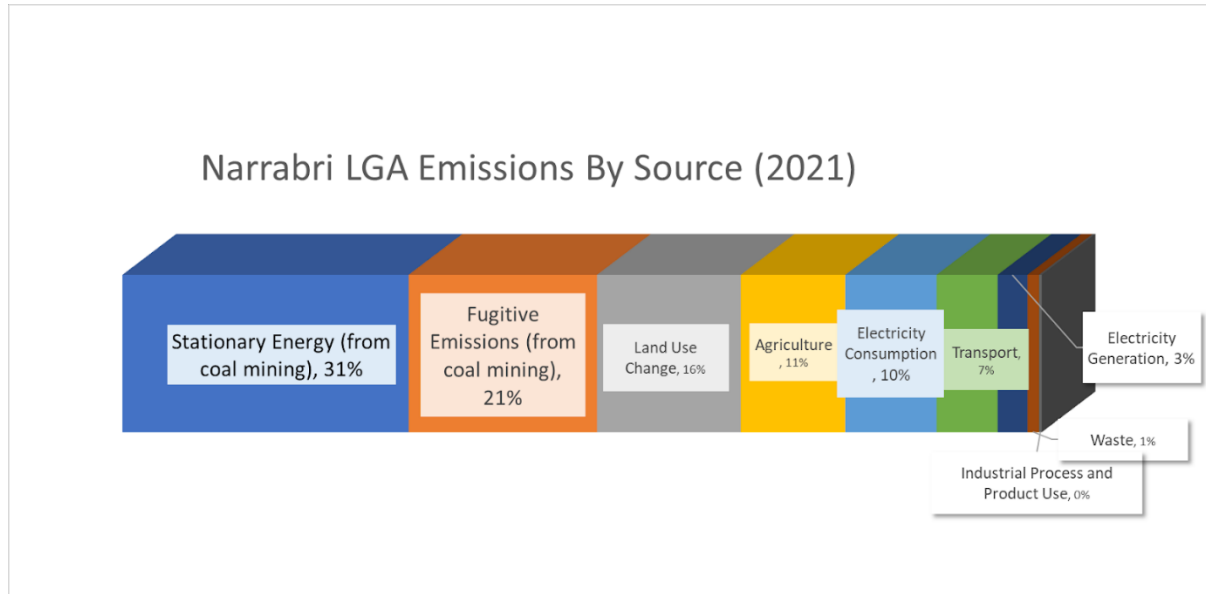
Current Emissions Profile of the Shire

Narrabri LGA currently hosts an approved but not yet built coal seam gasfield and five operating coal mines. According to the CER Safeguard data the 22/23FY Scope One emissions were ~1.2MTPA. The image below depicts the current Scope One emissions from the 22/23 FY operating projects; Boggabri, Narrabri Underground and Maules Creek and includes the predicted emissions once the approved Vickery and Narrabri Gas projects are operating and makes a note of the Boggabri and Maules Creek expansions currently sought.



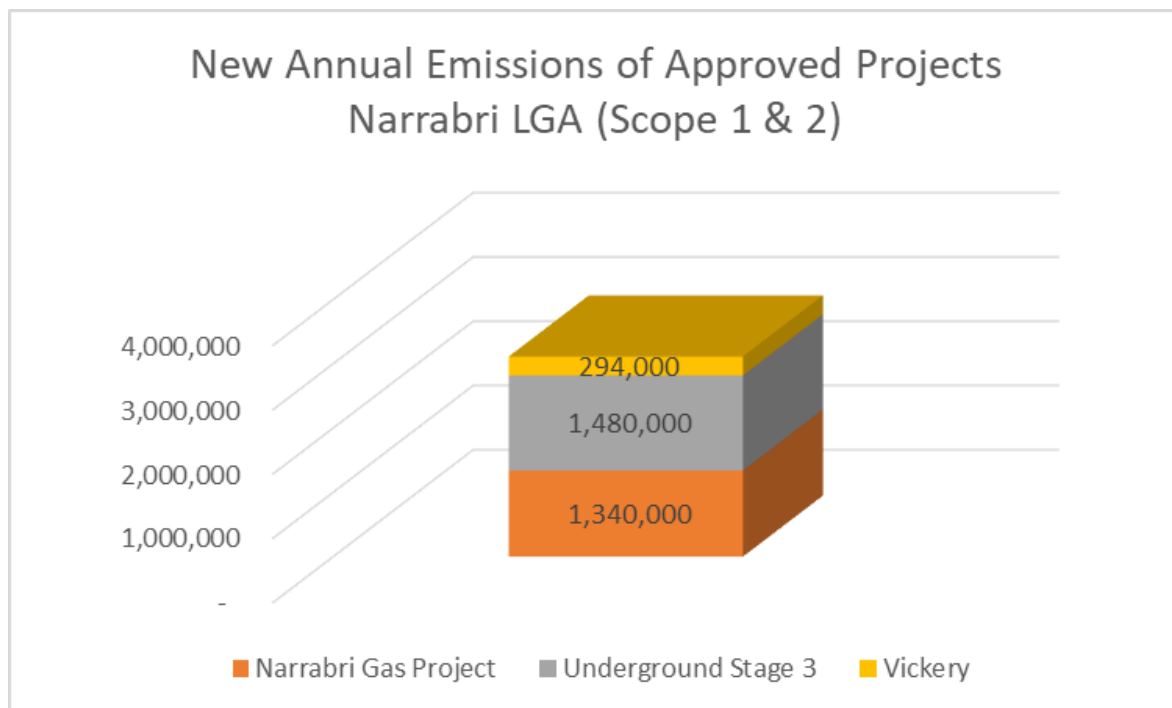
The Narrabri Shire LGA's emissions (based on the NSW Emissions Dashboard data which is only up to 2021 CY) were 1.9MT per annum, with 52% of the LGA's emissions coming from coal mining's fugitive emissions and stationary energy sources (see image below).

Electricity consumption, where emissions reductions are currently being sought by transitioning to renewables are only 10% of our LGA's emissions. Agriculture provides 11% of emissionsⁱ.



Even if NSW was to achieve 100% of its electricity demand from decarbonised sources, this would reduce our local emissions burden by only 10%.

Since this 2021 data, the Narrabri Shire has been approved three new huge emissions sources, adding a predicted further 3M tonnes of GHG emissions per annum, should / when these new approvals move to production phase. There are a further two projects currently seeking or planning to seek approvals this year.



This graph shows the three projects that have already been approved and the annual extra 3M tonnes of emissions that they will add to the current 1.9MT of emissions in the Narrabri Shire. This will bring our shire's total annual emissions to around 5M tonnes!

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If about half of our Shire's emissions are currently (2021 figures from NSW Emissions Dashboard) from mining, when these new projects are all up and running we can expect our annual emissions to increased by 150% and those attributable to mining will become 75% of our total shire emissions.

The emissions levels from the coal and gas sector in the Narrabri shire are absolutely staggering with plenty more where these came from!

Whilst much of the public discourse is around the need to maintain the 1,400 locals employed in mining across the Northwest region, should the Report's statement be true, there must be more dialogue about protecting the 1,200 agricultural jobsⁱⁱ in the region as well and how this trade-off between sectors would pan out.

Northwest is Falling Through the Cracks

The northwest region is in a very unique position in that it is not in a Renewable Energy Zone but is also not considered by the federal Net Zero Economic Authority because it is not a coal fired power station region, and yet we have exorbitantly high emissions from coal mining and a number of jobs reliant on this industry. Our region deserves a locally relevant transition plan but with the removal of the NSW Royalties for Rejuvenation Expert Panels there is no framework from the NSW Government for this to occur.

Emissions Dashboard out of Date

It is also worth noting that the key data used by community to keep up to date on emissions is the NSW Emissions Dashboard and SEED Portal. The data used in this submission came from that data source, however the local government level data has not been updated since 2021. We know how crucial timing is to this issue so having data this out of date is really unhelpful.

Strategic Statement on Coal

As a community seeking a locally relevant transition plan, it is also counter productive to continue to have the NSW government's Strategic Statement on coal to continue to be used to justify new and expanding coal mines. This Statement is in desperate and urgent need of being updated to match the NSW Government modern day policies but this still has not happened. This creates further confusion and contradictions for the community.

Recommendations

We recommend that the NSW Emissions Dashboard local government level data must be kept up to date.

We recommend that the Strategic Statement on Coal be updated to reflect current priorities and policies.

Joint Standing Committee Inquiry into the First Report by the Net Zero Commission
12/2/02025

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We recommend that a locally relevant transition plan be instigate for the Northwest.

We recommend that all approvals of new coal expansions (including those presented through modifications processes) be paused with immediate effect until advice has been provided by the NZC to the NSW government.

We request that a dedicated report from the NZC be presented on the risks that coal and gas expansions pose to the NSW's Net Zero targets. We would ask that this have a regional lens as well that brings into focus the highly unique situation in Northwest NSW. This is highly urgent and should be completed by June 2025. The report should include advice on a coal sectoral target to drive emissions reduction in the coal sector.

ⁱ <https://www.seed.nsw.gov.au/net-zero-emissions-dashboard>

ⁱⁱ <https://app.remplan.com.au/narrabri/economy/industries/employment>