

18th August 2025

To The Commission Panel:
PROFESSOR NEAL MENZIES AM (CHAIR)
ALEXANDRA O'MARA
PROFESSOR ELIZABETH TAYLOR A

RE State Significant Development Application for the Restart of the Redbank Power Station (SSD-56284960), Public Submissions

Several years ago, when this project was referred as a State significant development, I wrote a submission in favour of the development proceeding. At that time my focus was on the merits of the project, and its potential to offset to some extent, the impacts of increasing power costs, emerging gas supply issues, and rising unemployment in the Hunter Valley. Since that time, the default rate for residential power consumption in New South Wales has increased by approximately 20%, gas supply charges have increased approximately 26% for residential consumption and 50% for Industrial supply and the unemployment rate in the Hunter Valley has increased to 4.3% against State figure of 3.3%.

In summing up the recent IPCC public meeting, the Commission Chair Prof Menzies acknowledged that the benefits of the Redbank project in terms of jobs, energy reliability and diversification are in the main unambiguous. However, the Commissioner also outlined the potential for perverse outcomes such as traffic, noise, air quality or modifications to the agricultural landscape. Having read the transcripts, I believe these outcomes are arguably manageable. In this connection, I would like to mention that the proposal, as put to the commission by the proponent's spokesperson Mr Mark Jackson, has been assessed as compliant in accordance with the law of New South Wales, and all State Government agencies and regulators.

It would be difficult to find a better example or case for the repurposing of infrastructure such as the modernisation of the Redbank Power Station for base load power generation from the combustion of biomass. Rather than being an idle piece of infrastructure, the Power Station will positively contribute to the Governments 2050 net zero emissions goal. Most certainly this goal will not be achieved with continued reliance on existing coal fired power stations for base load generation.

Further, I believe the Commission Panel should consider as part of its assessment, that the proposed shut down of Bayswater power station has been brought forward by approximately 5 years to 2030. The closure of Baywater will create a 5000MW gap in the State Energy Sector, and not all of this can be replaced by renewables such as wind and solar, particularly for base load availability/reliability. Therefore, developments such as Redbank have a legitimate role in bridging this gap, and assisting in the State and Federal governments transition to net zero objectives.

Yours Faithfully

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Michael Johnstone.

Michael Johnstone