

This policy is currently under review.

Greens NSW

Coal and Coal Seam Gas Policy



Revised July 2011

Principles

1. The overwhelming scientific evidence of human-induced global warming demands that each state and nation substantially reduce greenhouse gas emissions and bring about an end to the fossil fuel-based economy.
2. NSW, as a major coal producer, user and exporter, has a particular responsibility to break the dominance of the coal corporations and urgently begin the transition to a low carbon and efficient economy which will increase the number and quality of jobs.
3. Given that coal mined in NSW is a major source of greenhouse gases on a national and global scale, The Greens are committed to phasing out the coal industry and its replacement with a jobs-rich clean energy economy.
4. Coal Seam Gas (CSG) mining cannot be considered a 'clean Transition' fuel source due to the potential for substantial fugitive methane emissions during production.
5. Coal mining results in massive damage to:
 - 5.1 the social and economic viability of communities in the vicinity of coal mines;
 - 5.2 ecosystems, rivers and the geological integrity of landscapes; and
 - 5.3 other wealth and employment generating activities including farming and tourism.
6. As the coal industry has become increasingly mechanised and more capital intensive, the number of jobs in coal mining has significantly reduced in NSW and around Australia. This stands in stark contrast to the enormous employment potential of renewable energy, energy efficiency and public transport where export industries could be developed based on successes in the domestic market.
7. Increasing the capacity of the NSW coal industry will not only damage the environment and employment potential but also frustrate and foreclose on the development of a low carbon economy.
8. Coal Seam Gas if allowed to develop in NSW has the potential to:
 - 8.1 Pollute both ground and surface water through the extraction of large volumes of saline underground water and the injection of chemicals into gas wells during hydraulic fracturing.

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- 8.2 Undermine ground water supplies through the drawdown of fresh aquifers.
- 8.3 Destroy agricultural and environmentally significant areas due to the large surface infrastructure required to support an operating gas field.

Detail

The Greens NSW

Coal

- 9. Oppose the development of any new coal mines or the expansion of existing coal mines. We also oppose the expansion of coal handling infrastructure. During the transition to a low carbon emissions economy, the nation's energy and metallurgical needs can be satisfied by existing coal mines.
- 10. Will work towards stopping development consent and the granting of export licences for all new coal mines.
- 11. Will work to improve the mine development assessment process to take full and unbiased account of:
 - 11.1 Greenhouse gas emissions from coal usage whether it is exported or burned in NSW;
 - 11.2 Greenhouse gas emissions released during the mining and transportation of coal, including coal seam methane fugitive emissions;
 - 11.3 Adverse economic, social and health impacts on local communities;
 - 11.4 Damage to rivers, streams and other waterways;
 - 11.5 Noise, dust and transport related impacts on local communities;
 - 11.6 Damages to the landscape;
 - 11.7 Reduction in tourism potential;
 - 11.8 Damage to agriculture; and
 - 11.9 Loss of cultural and natural heritage.
- 12. Believe that an immediate start should be made to the transition of the electricity industry to a renewable energy and energy efficiency basis.
- 13. Will work to ensure that greenhouse gas emissions from metallurgical uses of coal are minimised by:
 - 13.1 enforcing world's best practices in process efficiency;
 - 13.2 maximising feed-stock recycling; and
 - 13.3 state, national and global transition to selecting manufactured materials that minimise embodied emissions.

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14. Will work to ensure that the operations of existing coal mines conform to the world's best practices in industrial relations for mineworkers, occupational health and mine safety, environmental protection; and are designed to minimise impacts on local communities including noise, dust and amenity. In particular, The Greens will work for:
 - 14.1 increased enforcement of current environmental standards and requirements and higher penalties for breaches of mine consent requirements;
 - 14.2 the establishing of local environmental monitoring committees to monitor and audit the performance of all coal mines;
 - 14.3 the development of regional industry-wide environmental monitoring programmes;
 - 14.4 the development and implementation of a programme for revegetation (with indigenous species) of disused coal mining land. Reforestation components of such activities should not be allowed to be used as a carbon dioxide sink in any emissions trading scheme; and
 - 14.5 improved monitoring of the environmental consequences of abandoned mine sites and in particular their impact on the aquatic environment.
15. Support the phasing out of all existing subsidies to coal mining . This includes immediately ending the Federal government's diesel fuel rebate for mining operations.
16. Are committed to "just transitions" for communities that have traditionally derived income from coal mining operations, to support job creation and the development of a secure economic future for those communities. Funding for retraining and the seeding of new industries in coal communities should be paid for by a levy on existing coal mines.
17. Believe that where coal mines are closed, there is an urgent need for full rehabilitation, not only to restore the area of mine operations but also to protect water quality in all affected rivers and streams.
18. Reject the promotion of "clean coal" by politicians and coal lobbyists as nothing more than a marketing tool to disguise the devastating environmental impacts of coal mining and use. Carbon capture and storage (geosequestration) is an unproven technology that is likely to be expensive, risky and limited by availability of appropriate burial sites.
19. Oppose substantial funding of "clean coal" research and development at the expense of sustainable energy technology.
20. Will campaign for a levy on all existing coal mines to pay for:
 - 20.1 just transitions for communities that are currently economically dependent on coal mining;

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- 20.2 mine rehabilitation where mine owners have failed to leave adequate resources to restore the local environment and protect rivers, streams and ground water; and
- 20.3 investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Coal Seam Gas

The Greens NSW

- 21. Oppose CSG exploration and production and associated pipeline and export infrastructure developments.
- 22. Will campaign for an immediate moratorium on new exploration and production licenses and a special Commission of Inquiry into the environmental, social and economic impact of this industry.
- 23. Will campaign for activities regulated under the Petroleum Onshore Act 1991 to be subject to the all provisions of the Water Management Act 2000
- 24. Will oppose the 5 year royalty holiday for activities regulated under the Petroleum Onshore Act 1991.
- 24.1 Will work to ensure increased enforcement of development consent requirements and environmental protection licences with higher penalties for breaches of consent requirements;
- 24.2 Will work to require mandatory ground and surface water monitoring conducted by truly independent assessors.