

Greens NSW

Coal and Coal Seam Gas Policy



Revised May 2014

Principles

The Greens NSW believe:

1. The overwhelming scientific evidence of human-induced global warming demands that each state and nation substantially reduce greenhouse gas emissions and bring about a transition away from fossil fuels to a 100% renewable energy economy.
2. New South Wales, as a major coal producer, user and exporter, has a particular responsibility to end the reliance on coal and urgently begin the transition to a low carbon and energy efficient economy.
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) is not a 'clean transition' fuel because of the potential for substantial fugitive methane emissions associated with extraction and distribution. CSG may prove to be more damaging to the climate than coal.
5. Coal mining and CSG exploration and extraction results in massive damage to:
 - a. the social and economic viability of communities in the vicinity of coal mines;
 - b. ecosystems, rivers, and the geological integrity of landscapes;
 - c. other wealth and employment generating activities including farming and tourism;
 - d. health of communities;
 - e. climate.
6. The modern mining sector is capital intensive compared to other sectors of the economy. A switch in investment to renewable energy will generate substantially more jobs than are currently available in the fossil-fuel sector.

7. Increasing the capacity of the NSW coal industry will not only damage the environment and potential employment but also frustrate and foreclose on the development of a low carbon economy.
8. Coal Seam Gas:
 - a. Pollutes ground and surface water through the extraction of large volumes of saline water and the injection of chemicals into gas wells.
 - b. Reduces ground water supplies through the draw-down of fresh aquifers.
 - c. Destroys agricultural and environmentally significant areas due to the large surface infrastructure required to support an operating gas field.

Aims

Coal

The Greens NSW will:

9. promote a fast transition of our energy systems from fossil fuels to renewable energy.
10. phase out existing coal mines and coal export, while ensuring that existing mine workers have access to retraining and high quality, unionised jobs in the emerging sustainable economy.
11. oppose the development of any new coal mines or the expansion of existing coal mines.
12. 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.
13. oppose development consent and export licences for all new coal mines.
14. In the absence of a ban on new coal mines and expansions, support a rigorous mine development assessment process to prioritise and take full and unbiased account of:
 - a. Aboriginal cultural heritage and communities;
 - b. greenhouse gas emissions from coal usage whether it is exported or burned in NSW;

- c. greenhouse gas emissions released during the mining and transportation of coal, including coal seam methane fugitive emissions;
- d. adverse economic, social and health impacts on local communities;
- e. damage to rivers, streams, aquifers and other waterways;
- f. noise, dust and transport related impacts on local communities;
- g. damages to the landscape;
- h. reduction in tourism potential;
- i. damage to agriculture; and
- j. loss of cultural and natural heritage.

15. Will work to ensure that greenhouse gas emissions from metallurgical uses of coal are minimised by:

- a. enforcing world's best practices in process efficiency;
- b. maximising feed-stock recycling; and
- c. regulations to require the use of manufactured materials that minimise embodied emissions.

16. 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:

- a. increased enforcement of current environmental standards and requirements and higher penalties for breaches of mine consent requirements;
- b. the establishing of local environmental monitoring committees to monitor and audit the performance of all coal mines;
- c. the development of regional industry-wide environmental monitoring programs;

- d. 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
- e. improved monitoring of the environmental consequences of abandoned mine sites and in particular their impact on the aquatic environment.
- f. the immediate and comprehensive environmental rehabilitation of abandoned coal mine sites.

17. Reject all subsidies to coal mining, while supporting a just transition to jobs in local sustainable industries for displaced workers.

18. The Greens NSW are committed to:

- a. just transitions for communities that have traditionally derived income from coal mining operations, and
- b. support job creation and the development of a secure economic future for those communities. Funding for retraining and investment in new industries should be paid for by a levy on existing coal mines.

19. Reject carbon capture and storage and other so-called 'clean coal' technologies systems for fossil fuels on the basis they are unproven, energy intensive, environmentally risky, and inferior to a transition to renewable energy.

20. Oppose government funding of 'clean coal' research and development at the expense of sustainable energy technology.

21. Support a levy on existing coal mines to pay for:

- a. just transitions for communities that are currently economically dependent on coal mining;
- b. environmental rehabilitation of abandoned mine sites; and
- c. investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Coal Seam Gas

The Greens NSW will:

22. Oppose coal seam gas exploration and production, and associated pipeline and export infrastructure developments.
23. Support an immediate moratorium on new exploration and production licences and a special Commission of Inquiry into the environmental, social, governance and economic impact of this industry.
24. Support all activities regulated under the Petroleum Onshore Act 1991 being subject to all provisions of the Water Management Act 2000.
25. Support strict enforcement of development consent requirements and environmental protection licences with tough penalties for breaches of consent requirements;
26. Support mandatory monitoring conducted by government-selected independent assessors, including base-line testing, of:
 - a. ground and surface water
 - b. methane emissions.
27. Support full public and accessible disclosure of all details of the fossil fuel industry, including:
 - a. the companies involved and their ownership, profits, royalties and any political donations,
 - b. data from all environmental monitoring of water and air ecosystems
 - c. requirements and conditions that mines are required to satisfy in relation to environmental offsets, noise limits and dust levels; and reports by inspectors enforcing these conditions.
 - d. a triple-bottom-line summary of coal mining: financial, social, and environmental, showing profits and losses in each category.