

PORT WARATAH COAL SERVICES TERMINAL 4

TO: NSW Department of Planning
Attn: Ms Rebecca Newman

SUBMISSION OBJECTING TO THE T4 PROJECT

For decades the people of the Hunter Valley have believed that the North-Western boundary of the industrial area on Kooragang Island was defined by the position of the main railway track. The area of land to the north and west of the track was understood to be conservation land of the Hunter Wetlands National Park and Kooragang Island Wetland Rehabilitation Project. This is clearly shown on the large map on the Welcome signs near the entry to Ash Island and on the Ash Island Birding Route Brochure to be seen here:

<http://www.hboc.org.au/resources/documents/Ash%20Is%20Birding%20Route.pdf>

The brochure describes Swan Pond and the adjacent Wader Pond to be “the most important sites on Ash Island for water birds”. Swan pond is particularly important as it can at times provide habitat for up to one thousand water birds of more than a dozen species, including species such as the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper which migrate here each summer from north-eastern Siberia and are protected under the Ramsar Agreement. The number of birds and the range of species depend very much on season, recent rainfall here and recent rainfall in other places. It is possible to see no birds one week and a thousand birds a few weeks later.

The initial maps of the project show a 200 metre wide strip of wetland north-west of the railway to be taken off the National Park and added to the Industrial area. The pond in Bittern Corner is a known Green and Gold Bell Frog location. As shown in the Environmental Assessment, there are many other locations on Ash Island suitable for and known to contain Bell Frogs. Later map versions (Feb 2012) show that the Bittern Corner pond has been saved but that most of the bird rich wetland of Swan Pond is to be filled in to allow construction of rail works.

Swan Pond has a unique ecology. It is not replicated anywhere else on Ash Island. It is the ecological jewel in the crown for all of Kooragang Island. There appears to be no operational reason why the proposed T4 Coal Loader needs to destroy this area. There is plenty of land on the eastern side of the railway in the vicinity of Swan Pond for new tracks and flyovers. The size of the proposed coal stockpiles, equivalent to a pile of coal 50m wide, 20m high and 10km long, seems to be far in excess of the needs to fill five coal ships of the largest size. It would seem that the designers of the coal loader want to destroy the ecologically important Swan Pond just to park trains and store coal. **Both these functions can be done at other nearby Lower Hunter Valley Sites with little or no conservation value.**

My submission strongly urges the Planning Department to require PWCS to redesign the T4 Coal Loader so as to contain it within the Industrial Area bounded by the existing railway track. The boundary of Hunter Wetlands National Park should be restored to the original location.

Jim Smart
East Maitland
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