



Hunter Bird Observers Club

Affiliated with BirdLife Australia

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The General Manager
Singleton Council
PO Box 314
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Re: Redbank Power Station modification DA 183/1993

Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc. strongly objects to the proposal to modify the consent conditions for the Redbank power station to enable the burning of trees, euphemistically known as biomass.

We oppose the proposal because its operation will undoubtedly depend on logging of native forest which provides habitat for Australia's shrinking biodiversity, including bird species. The proposal will create an increased demand for whole trees to fuel the power station when leftover wood (biomass) from the timber industry becomes increasingly difficult to source. Western Australia proposes to ban logging native forest by 2024 and Victoria is progressing a similar proposal. There is little doubt that NSW and remaining states will follow suit.

In the not too distant future, it will be considered criminal to burn wood to provide power because of increased carbon emissions adding to the detrimental effects of climate change. The overall climate impact is arguably worse than coal, and its impact on forests and all the animals that rely on that habitat will be devastating.

Sweetman's second stage development seeks to produce "green hydrogen" commercially through the gasification of woodchips. HBOC fails to see the "green" component of this plan where detrimental emissions from the process may well exceed any benefits from the "green hydrogen" produced.

Woodchips are made from small and 'defective' trees unsuitable for milling. These trees are usually left standing, but under NSW biomass regulations, these living trees are classified as "waste" and can be cleared.

The carbon emissions from the thousands of trucks required to deliver the wood to the power station from all over NSW will also be significant.

The NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment Scientific Committee lists the clearing of native vegetation as a key threatening process: <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/>. Some reasons for the determination are:

- 1. Clearing of native vegetation is recognised as a major factor contributing to loss of biological diversity.*
- 2. Land Clearance is listed as a Key Threatening Process under the Commonwealth's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act, 1999.*
- 3. In New South Wales since 1788 at least 61% of the original native vegetation has been cleared, thinned or substantially or significantly disturbed (Environment Protection Authority 1997). The proportion of area cleared varies between region and community type (Native Vegetation Advisory*

Council 1999) and in some cases has exceeded 90% (for example - South East Grassy Forests - (Keith & Bedward 1999).

4. Clearing of any area of native vegetation, including areas less than 2 hectares in extent, may have significant impacts on biological diversity.

Land clearance is the greatest threat to the loss of biodiversity in NSW where 1025 species are listed as threatened as well as 112 ecological communities:

The main threats to listed species in NSW are habitat loss due to the clearing and degradation of native vegetation and the spread of invasive pests and weeds. The capacity of species to adapt to these pressures is further constrained by climate change. <https://www.soe.epa.nsw.gov.au/all-themes/biodiversity/threatened-species>

Of the 452 species of birds in NSW 31% are currently listed as threatened <https://www.soe.epa.nsw.gov.au/all-themes/biodiversity/threatened-species>. A comparison with the situation in Europe, a much more highly developed/built landscape compared with NSW reveals just how serious the loss of avifauna in NSW actually is. The European bird list is comprised of 533 species of which 13% are listed as threatened. <https://www.birdlife.org/europe-and-central-asia/news/european-red-list-birds-here>

Hunter Bird Observers Club asks Singleton Council/Land and Environment Court to reject this proposal which will encourage increased land clearance and further loss of our biodiversity.



Ann Lindsey – Conservation co-ordinator for Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc. 26/09/2021.

About Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.

Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc. (HBOC) was established in 1976 and currently has a membership over 400 members. Although the Club is based in Newcastle NSW membership includes members from other areas in NSW and from interstate.

Aims of HBOC:

to encourage and further the study and conservation of Australian birds and their habitat and
to encourage bird observing as a leisure-time activity.

Activities include monthly regular outings, evening meetings, camps and field studies. HBOC promotes systematic field studies which include regular surveys by volunteers from the membership:

All data gathered from field studies are entered into the national database, Birddata, administered by BirdLife Australia. Data are used to underpin conservation issues.

HBOC has a long history of working in collaboration with local councils, national parks, industry and schools.