

Wellington mayor calls for an urgent review into Gas Fired Power Station

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Cr Rod Buhr has called for a review into the Gas Fired Station

The NSW deputy premier and Member for Dubbo Troy Grant has backed calls by Wellington mayor Cr Rod Buhr calling for an urgent review into Wellington's Gas Fired Power Station.

The mayor contacted the office of the NSW Planning minister following a wave of community concern over noise impacts at a meeting about the ERM power station on Thursday night.

Cr Buhr said he had taken the concerns of the community on board and acted quickly.

"On Friday I forwarded a letter to the responsible minister, Pru Goward, requesting that the development extension be suspended pending a meeting between State Planning, ERM, Martin Sannikka and Council to seek some clarity on the noise issue," he said.

"I think it is very difficult for the lay person to fully understand the technical aspects of this project and how it may impact on their day-to-day lives.

"It's also difficult when one expert presents data and information which is then refuted by another expert.

"I think it would be useful to have the information tested by an independent third party."

The mayor called the deputy premier who said he backed the mayor's action.

"I appreciate the briefing provided to me by the council regarding the noise and planning concerns on the Wellington Gas Fired Power Station," Deputy Premier Troy Grant said.

"I support the council's position to call for urgent review and their representations to the planning minister. I look forward when returned as the state member to facilitate with council a meeting of concerned stakeholders to work towards the best outcome for the community."

The Member for Dubbo was not at the meeting of concerned residents on Thursday night.

A farmer from Uranquinty near Wagga who lives near Origin Energy's Gas Fired Power station told Thursday night's meeting the noise from a the station there had 'basically busted the place'.

He said it was a dire warning and Wellington residents had to act now, even though the project won't probably begin until 2018/19.



Uranquinty farmer Sam McGuinness talks to farmers about Gas Fired Power Station

At the meeting called by the NSW Farmers' Wellington District Council over the station, Sam McGuinness warned residents if they did nothing 'the effects would be catastrophic'.

"You have to get to this power station shut down. You are going to be affected. Go to Uranquinty. Go and talk to the locals and then you should start demonstrating," he said.

"This site is very close to your town. The speakers here have been very good outlining the large noise impacts this will have on the whole town, I am urging you to speak your voice."

Mr McGuinness gave out numbers of a lawyer who has attempted to protect many in the small Riverina town. The meeting was told the lawyer was representing the silent who couldn't talk because of non disclosure agreements. He said many were suffering from excessive noise from the power station there.

"You have to go out there and listen. You have to defend your town, millions of dollars have gone out to buy your compliance," he said.

ERM Power was the original co-owners of the Uranquinty site, they sold it to Origin Energy in 2008.

Ninety residents came to the Thursday night's meeting and many aired their views for the first time.

Cr Pip Smith, who is also a landholder, pleaded with ERM's representative at the meeting asking 'Why do we have this here?'

"Why would you want to risk doing this to Wellington," she said.

Her calls followed questions of water and noise impacts at the proposed site which has been dormant since it was conceived.

ERM Power told residents it was committed to ensuring that the proposed Wellington power station operated as quietly as possible with minimal impact on local residents.

"The company has applied for an extension of the development approval for the gas-fired project, which will be developed only in response to electricity market signals supporting the need for new generation in NSW," the company representative told the meeting.

ERM Power CEO Generation Derek McKay said the company appreciated the opportunity to speak about the project and address concerns that local residents might have about the impact of the project on them.

"We want the people of Wellington to know that we are committed to mitigating the impact of the project on nearby residents. To this end we have reconfigured the design to reduce the size of the power station and to ensure that it is even quieter," he said.

"The NSW Department of Planning and the Environment Protection Agency have confirmed that the proposed development complies with NSW noise policy.

"We have consulted extensively with residents about the project, which we believe has general community support, and will keep the community informed and address issues as they arise," Mr McKay said.

Mr Pittlik told the meeting the development had been on the books since 2006 and signalled it might not even happen until 2018/19. He was answering questions on why the station has taken so long to happen and when it might begin.

Local farmer Michael Barton said he was concerned over water and possible leakages at the site when the station operates.

"This will have an enormous impact on the Macquarie River and those downstream. Dubbo doesn't want Wellington's dirty water," he said.

Farmer Tim Woods who lives next to the proposed site said fellow residents like Nat Barton had fought a long battle against the power station.

"I thank Nat for his guts and determination. At the end of the day this power station will affect the whole town," he said.

"I am determined to warn the whole community this will effect people everybody not just us."

Nat Barton said he wanted to get the truth about the power station.

"You are going to turn this into a noisy industrial town from a quiet town," he said.

"Why can't this be moved. We have gone through 10 years of uncertainty. This will make life intolerable. Our property values are crashing. I suggest the Wellington Council has been set up here," he added.

Independent expert Martin Sannikka who has been involved in the areas of noise impact for more than 40 years said this was all about 'location, location, location'.

He called for the gas fired power station to be driven away.

"This site should be at least 60 kilometres from the town to mitigate the noise impact on the town," he said.

Read the original newspaper article:

<http://www.wellingtontimes.com.au/story/2962222/mayor-calls-for-urgent-review-into-gas-fired-power-station/>