

## Eraring Ash Dam Expansion - Community Consultative Committee (CCC) – Annual Report 2023

CCC project name:	Eraring Ash Dam Expansion	Reporting period:	2020 - 2023
Independent chairperson:	Margaret Harvie	Proponent contact:	Mikayla Henderson

### 1. Executive summary / introduction

The Ash Dam on the site of the Eraring Coal Fired Power Station is to be expanded. Eraring is located within Lake Macquarie City Council in NSW on the shores of Lake Macquarie, approximately 120 km north of Sydney and 40 km south of Newcastle.

The Community Consultative Committee (CCC) was formed as part of Modification 1 to the existing approval for the Ash Dam (Project Approval 07\_0084). The approved modification application enables Origin to:

- change how ash is deposited within the ash dam
- extend the ash dam placement area
- relocate ancillary infrastructure including stormwater facilities

The project provides for expansion allowing for storage of an estimated 5 million cubic metres of additional ash, this being a waste product from the Power Station.

The project modification that originally established this committee was approved by the Independent Planning Commission (IPC) in late 2019 but construction is yet to commence. A further related modification, Modification 2 (Ash Recycling), was approved in June 2022 and the CCC is also linked to this aspect of the project. Modification 2 enables Origin to increase the ash recycling capacity through upgrade of the infrastructure and creation of additional storage.

Origin announced in February 2022 the potential early retirement of Eraring Power Station as early as August 2025. In March 2023, Origin announced the signature of a binding Scheme Implementation Deed with the Consortium of Brookfield and MidOcean Energy for the acquisition of Origin. Should the sale progress, the transaction will occur in late December 2023.

The progression of the commencement of construction of the ash dam expansion project is being considered by the business in consideration of the discussed announcements. However Origin has progressed with getting all pre-construction management plan approvals in place to facilitate construction should it commence.

Origin Energy as the proponent is well established in the community with many employees of the power station living locally. There are, however, mixed views about the Ash Dam and its expansion with a range of environmental concerns around the treatment and storage of this waste and the potential environmental and social impacts.

The CCC was established through the Conditions of Approval and operates in accordance with the Department of Planning & Environment's Community Consultative Committee Guidelines for State Significant Projects (June 2023). The CCC's membership consists of:

- Seven individual community representatives
- One Lake Macquarie City Council delegate
- Three representatives of Origin as the proponent; and

- One Independent Chairperson.

Origin has continued to support the operation of the CCC as per the conditions of approval. This is despite the lack of activity on site related to Modification 1. Origin has provided information outside the scope of the CCC on other projects onsite at Eraring such as the Southern Embankment Stabilisation Project. Continuation of the CCC meetings is in anticipation of the projects progressing.

## 2. CCC activities:

Meetings of the CCC held to date included:

- Four meetings in 2020
- Three meetings in 2021
- Three meetings in 2022
- Three meetings in 2023.

There have been a total of thirteen meetings. Meetings on average have at least six community members present and the lowest number of community representatives present has been four people. Meetings are in general arranged to suit all participants and most absences have been due to other last minute commitments for CCC members.

The committee activities since it first met in May 2020 have involved numerous presentations from Origin staff and experts, Origin representatives have answered many questions from committee members and provided two tours of the site.

The first tour of the Ash Dam site and surrounds was in April 2021. Since that meeting and tour two new members have joined the CCC (replacing resignations due to ill health). A further site tour was conducted in October 2023 for these members for them to view the Ash Dam and the Southern Embankment Stability Project that has commenced. It should be noted that this embankment stability project is not directly related to this project modification.

The committee is effective in that Origin have been open in providing information about the Ash Dam current operations and future plans. Many of the questions from members of the CCC relate to information of community interest but the questions are not always directly related to Modification 1 or 2. Given that major construction of the Ash Dam Expansion is yet to commence it is difficult to measure the effectiveness of the CCC in relation the core role of the committee.


## 3. Key issues

Issue	Actions taken	Next steps
<b>Concerns about the operation of the Ash Dam</b>	Concern about the future remediation of the dam, the impact of water run-off and health and safety issues/ impacts	Information has been provided as part of presentations over the three years that the CCC have met. Some of the information is highly technical requiring considerable time taken at meetings to unpack this detail.
<b>Recycling of Ash</b>	Considerable interest in where the Ash is currently going and the potential for its use.	Members have asked a number of questions about the current destination and use of Ash from the site and potential to reuse it for new products (i.e., road resurfacing), rather than just as fill or stored as waste.

<b>The sale of Origin and management going forward</b>	Interest that the conditions of consent for this modification are carried over with any new owner.	The CCC have been reassured that the conditions set by the Department of Planning and Environment remain the same through changed ownership. That is general matters discussed to date about the Ash Dam construction and operation will stay the same.
<b>Environmental issues related to the Power Station operations</b>	Concern about impacts in particular on water quality in the lake and impact on seagrass and fish.	While there is a level of concern from the CCC, this matter is not within the terms of reference for this committee. Origin have offered the information that they have available about conditions in the lake and potential impacts on biodiversity.
<b>Risks to Myuna Bay and the embankment stabilisation work</b>	Concern about the need to move the recreation centre and the potential danger as result of the current condition of this embankment.	Information has been offered by Origin on the Southern Embankment stabilisation including the methodology that has been used for this and the progress. While it is understood this is of great interest this embankment is in a different location and is not related to the Ash Dam modification.
<b>Battery Project</b>	Interest in the progress of this alternative energy source.	Origin have kept the CCC up to date with the progress of this project from the initial request for approval. This is a more recently approved project but is not overseen by a CCC.
<b>Haul Road</b>	Interest in the development of this new haul road that will result in trucks being removed from other local roads	The CCC have been updated on the progress of potential purchase of the land for this road and the associated approvals required. Origin is progressing this project however it is subject to agreement from the Birban Local Aboriginal Land Council

#### 4. Focus for next 12 months:

The CCC at this stage will continue to meet pending the commencement of activity on site. While the committee has been effective in that there has been a lot of information offered by Origin in relation to the future planned Ash Dam operations its function is constrained by the fact that the main activity for the project is yet to commence.

Signature of chairperson:	
Date:	14 November 2023