

AAP/ Canberra Times: Emissions danger if NSW delays coal shutdown: report

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The 2.88-gigawatt Eraring Power Station is due to be shuttered in August 2025

NSW can safely close Australia's largest coal-fired power station in 2025, secure supply and reduce power bills with a speedier rollout of renewables, analysis shows. The Lights Will Stay On report released on Tuesday warns delays to the closure of Eraring and the smaller Vales Point would cost the bank and risk the nation's emissions reduction target.

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The 2.88-gigawatt Eraring is due to be shuttered in August 2025 followed by the 1.32GW Vales Point in 2028 or 2029 - rapidly ending NSW's dependence on coal. NSW Energy Minister Penny Sharpe's office last week told media the Eraring timeline was a "challenge for energy reliability" and all options were being considered.

But the analysis by Climate Energy Finance director Tim Buckley finds NSW can close the power stations as planned with slight incentives for solar and wind investment. That included encouraging the continued installation of 1.2GW of rooftop solar each year.

Another 1.2GW a year could be found at the industry level, if some urgency was added to the approval process for 28GW of wind and solar project proposals in the NSW pipeline.

"With ambition and the right accelerated policy levers, this is entirely doable," the report said.

"(This) brings with it enormous opportunities and benefits of locking in permanently lower power prices longer term, decarbonisation of industry, new jobs, and overdue action on the climate science."

Extending Eraring's life - estimated by other reports to cost between \$200 million and \$400 million a year - would be an "incredible wasted opportunity" to accelerate renewable energy, the report said.

It also risked pushing back other coal power closure dates and thus undermining the federal government's legislated 43 per cent emissions reduction target.

That was a view shared by former AGL policy advisor, now energy consultant Stephanie Bashir, who said not accelerating generation, storage and transmission right now has could delay many coal closures.

"That will put power affordability, reliability and security at risk," the Nexa Advisory founder said.

"And Australia will fail to meet its emissions targets."

Delaying Eraring's demise could also create doubt in the minds of investors about future announced closures.

"We cannot afford to have less investment in new clean energy projects in NSW, or in Australia, at this time," Clean Energy Investor Group chief executive Simon Corbell said.

Illustrating the rapid transformation, coal has provided about 60 per cent of NSW's power in the past year, compared to 80 per cent four years earlier. That would be 24 per cent by 2030 with Eraring and Vales Point's closure.

It comes as the Minns government awaits an independent report on the state's energy policies including whether there is a timely and cost-effective transition of the electricity sector.

The report is due in August.

Premier Chris Minns on Monday said the priority was keeping the lights on.

"Nothing is going to undermine community confidence and support for the transition to renewables like the lights going out in a major public hospital in Sydney," he said.

Ms Sharpe, who also holds the environment portfolio, will meet her federal counterpart, Tanya Plibersek, on Tuesday in outer western Sydney.

They will tour one of the world's largest dry mixed-waste recycling facilities at Eastern Creek.

<https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/8273292/emissions-danger-if-nsw-delays-coal-shutdown-report/>