

Environment Protection Authority Victoria  
GPO Box 4395  
Melbourne VIC 3001

Submitted via email.

25 August 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

**Black coal fly ash – reducing regulatory barriers for use.**

The Australian Energy Council ('AEC') welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Victorian Environment Protection Authority's ('EPA') consultation on *Black coal fly ash – reducing the regulatory barriers* ('Consultation Paper').

The AEC is the peak industry body for electricity and downstream natural gas businesses operating in the competitive wholesale and retail energy markets. AEC members generate and sell energy to over 10 million homes and businesses and are major investors in renewable energy generation. The AEC supports reaching net-zero by 2050 as well as a 55 per cent emissions reduction target by 2035 and is committed to delivering the energy transition for the benefit of consumers.

The AEC broadly supports the approach proposed in the Victorian EPA's Consultation Paper on black coal fly ash use. As many of our members operate black coal-fired power stations, the AEC regularly participates in issues around coal ash remediation. We have highlighted in previous [submissions](#) that coal ash is a material with 'immense beneficial re-use capabilities that can reduce Australia's greenhouse emissions.' However, coal ash re-use remains 'under-utilised'. Reducing the regulatory barriers for its use, in this case reclassifying black coal ash from 'reportable priority waste' to 'priority waste', would be a helpful step towards encouraging greater re-use.

According to the Ash Development Association of Australia ('ADAA'), there are [extensive opportunities](#) to exploit the re-use of coal combustion products ('CCPs'), including black coal fly ash. Fly ash can be reused for a variety of construction activities, such as the manufacture of bricks, lightweight aggregate and concrete. Moreover, as [noted](#) by ADAA, such fly ash reuse in concrete and cement has environmental benefits 'saving up to one tonne of carbon dioxide per tonne of cement.' Importantly, these re-use opportunities can help decarbonise otherwise hard-to-abate areas like construction materials, which is important if Australia is to reach net-zero by 2050.

Despite the clear benefits of utilising fly-ash, Australia consistently lags behind other nations when it comes to our re-use rate. The latest National Waste Report from DCCEEW [notes](#) that Japan reuses up to 97 percent of its generated coal ash while both China and Great Britain reuse roughly 70 percent. By contrast, Australia only reuses half of its generated ash, far lower than the global average.

The AEC therefore welcomes the move by the Victorian EPA to lessen the disproportionate regulatory burden for black coal fly ash, though this may not be enough on its own. Ideally, the AEC would like to see further market incentives put in place to encourage greater uptake of black coal fly and the reuse of other CCPs like furnace bottom ash, boiler slags and cenospheres. Greater cooperation between regulatory bodies, electricity generators and other key stakeholders in the recycling and construction sectors should be sought to identify what the most appropriate market incentives are to maximise the re-use value of coal ash.

Any questions about this submission should be addressed to me by email to [braeden.keen@energycouncil.com.au](mailto:braeden.keen@energycouncil.com.au) or by telephone on 0422792557.

Yours sincerely,

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