



## Keeping Eraring running only solution for NSW power

### Stephen Galilee



**T**he impending closure of the Liddell Power Station has not come about suddenly. It is not a 'sleepier issue' that has ambushed its owners or our governments.

The closure of Liddell was announced by AGL way back in 2017. At the time, AGL promised a plan to replace the base load power generated by Liddell before the shutdown. Six years later, most of the plan to replace Liddell has not even made it off the blueprints. Meanwhile

residents of NSW find themselves swamped by the prospect of blackouts as winter approaches.

To replace the output of Liddell, AGL promised to build 1600 megawatts of new renewable power projects from wind and solar. This hasn't happened. AGL also promised to build a giant battery to store electricity produced by their brand new fleet of wind turbines and solar farms. This hasn't happened either.

AGL also promised to build a gas plant to help bridge the shortfall of electricity when Liddell closed and, you guessed it, we're still waiting for this too. These broken promises were backed by the previous NSW Government who assured us everything was in order. Energy Ministers turned a deaf-ear to

repeated warnings the AGL plan was only half-cooked, replacement generation wasn't being built quickly enough and that NSW was heading towards an electricity crisis.

Six wasted years later, this is exactly where we find ourselves. Broken promises, empty assurances and blind faith in a transition process that is failing to deliver the outcomes needed to keep the lights on.

To make matters worse, in 2022 Origin Energy announced they would be bringing forward the planned closure of their Eraring Power station by seven years. While Eraring was originally due to close in 2032, Origin now plans to close the station in 2025.

Following so closely after the closure of Liddell, this will place

extreme stress on the NSW power grid. And the last NSW Energy Minister left us with no realistic plan to replace the electricity to be ripped from the grid when Eraring closes.

It's sadly symbolic of the trouble we now face. Instead of a sensible approach to timing of the transition to renewable energy, there have been too many announcements, plans and promises timed to deliver media headlines, instead of actual projects.

Those responsible should be held accountable, as we now find, with little surprise, that their promises and plans generated lots of headlines but don't actually generate any power.

A sensible approach is now needed. With Liddell gone, and nothing ready to replace Eraring, the only alternative is to continue the

operation of Eraring until enough alternate energy generation is brought online.

During the recent NSW election campaign, incoming Premier Chris Minns showed great courage when he refused to rule out taking such action. It was a potentially risky move for the Premier. Yet he knew one of his most important responsibilities if elected was not to chase 'feelgood' headlines, but to keep the lights on for NSW.

Until enough reliable renewable electricity production and storage is ready to ensure we have affordable 24/7 power when the sun doesn't shine and the wind doesn't blow, there is simply no choice but to seek to extend the life of Eraring.

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