

NEWS

Ash recycling momentum

BY MATTHEW KELLY

THE state government will use its purchasing power to drive demand for materials containing recycled coal ash, environment minister Matt Kean has told Parliament.

About 200 million tonnes of coal ash waste is currently dumped in unlined sites across NSW, with more than half of the material stored in the Hunter and Central Coast.

The waste product, which poses an ongoing threat to waterways, soil and air, is growing by 3.8 million tonnes a year.

A public meeting attended by about 100 people last month demanded the state government do more to encourage coal ash recycling.

In response to a question from Lake Macquarie MP Greg Piper, Mr Kean said the government was keen to pursue opportunities to increase recycling of the material.

"Using ash, new products can be created that do not leave the community exposed to that substance. It can be used in creating new products like green cement,



POTENTIAL RESOURCE: It is estimated more than 200 million tonnes of coal ash waste is currently stored in unlined sites across the state, much of it in the Hunter and Lake Macquarie.

for example," Mr Kean said, adding that the government wanted to create circular economy for coal ash, thereby reducing the amount that went into ash dams.

The plan will be a feature

in the state's 20-year waste strategy.

"The government is looking at a number of mechanisms to increase the uptake and use of coal ash, including boosting demand by

using more recycled material in infrastructure projects," he said.

"It will be investing in the development of standards and certifications around the use of recycled content for

industry, making it easier for industry to purchase and use products that use coal ash.

"Finally, central to the government's plan will be using the purchasing power of government to drive demand for

the use of recycled products, including products that use coal ash in their production."

The findings of an Upper House inquiry into the remediation of sites containing coal ash is due to be tabled by the end of this month.

Transport for NSW currently uses coal ash in road construction projects.

In one example, 63,000 tonnes of the material was sourced from the Eraring power station for use on the Woolgoolga to Ballina project in concrete pavement.

Construction of the Scone Bypass used approximately 1500 tonnes of fly ash sourced from the Vales Point power station. Similarly, the M1 upgrade between Kari-ong to Somersby used fly ash in rigid pavements.

Origin Energy, which operates Eraring Power Station, has constructed a private haul road paved with a pavement product with an ash content of 92 per cent.

The NSW Environment Protection Authority is presently investigating the potential environmental impacts of coal ash waste dumps in Lake Macquarie.

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