

NSW Coal Mine Methane Forum Summary

The NSW Methane Forum, held at Parliament House in June 2025, brought together experts, members of parliament and community advocates to explore the urgent issue of [methane emissions from coal mining and their contribution to climate change](#).

Prompted by mounting concern from the NSW Government, agencies and the Net Zero Commission, the forum addressed methane's short-term climate impact, risks to state targets, abatement options, regulatory gaps and opportunities for reform. Methane is the second biggest driver of global warming after CO₂, but far more potent in the short term. Cutting methane is one of the fastest, most effective ways to slow climate change.

Yet NSW coal mines continue to release vast amounts of methane, so-called "fugitive emissions", into the atmosphere. These are poorly measured and largely unregulated and they are rising, not falling. Coal mine methane is now a live issue in the NSW Parliament and a defining challenge for the state's climate commitments.

Expert Highlights

Greg Bourne - The Climate Council

The International Energy Agency says methane from fossil fuels must drop 75% by 2030 to avoid runaway warming but current mine expansions are pushing us in the wrong direction. With 2024 already reaching 1.6°C of warming, Greg called for mandatory, independently verified methane measurement, with transparent, accessible data.

Rebecca Burdon, CEO of Climate Resource, co-author of [Australian methane targets - Insights from integrated assessment model scenarios](#) May 2025 [[summary here](#)].

Integrated assessment models (IAMs) consistently show that fossil fuel methane emissions must fall faster than other greenhouse gases to keep warming below 2°C. If these methane reductions aren't achieved, the overall cost of climate mitigation will rise. In fact, under global scenarios aiming to cap warming at 1.6°C to 2°C, Australia's fossil fuel methane must fall by 75–80% by 2030, while agricultural methane drops only slightly.

Henry Adams, expert on carbon market design and operation at Common Capital and co-author of [Unlocking cost-effective methane abatement in the NSW and QLD coal industry](#) May 2025. Coal mine methane accounts for ~7% of NSW emissions. These emissions could increase by 75% in NSW with continued approval of coal-mine expansions as well as improvements to methane measurement. . Abatement is affordable but coal companies are choosing profit and offsets over reductions. Common Capital modelling shows that supporting on-site abatement at just nine large underground mines in NSW could halve emissions by 2035, with costs under \$30/t CO₂-e. Henry proposed a methane abatement fund, thresholds and improved measurement.

Rachael Chick, Senior Solicitor, Environmental Defenders Office and co-author of [Improving Regulation of Coal Mine Methane in NSW](#) May 2025.

Coal mine methane in NSW is almost entirely unregulated, no licences require monitoring or abatement. However, existing laws give the EPA strong powers to act now. Methane caps, abatement technologies and best-practice reporting could all be enforced today. For new projects, the Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act could support refusals. With political will, major reductions are possible under current rules.