

# Community perspectives to climate change and energy technologies in Muswellbrook and Singleton

## Report for Coal & Allied

### Energy Transformed

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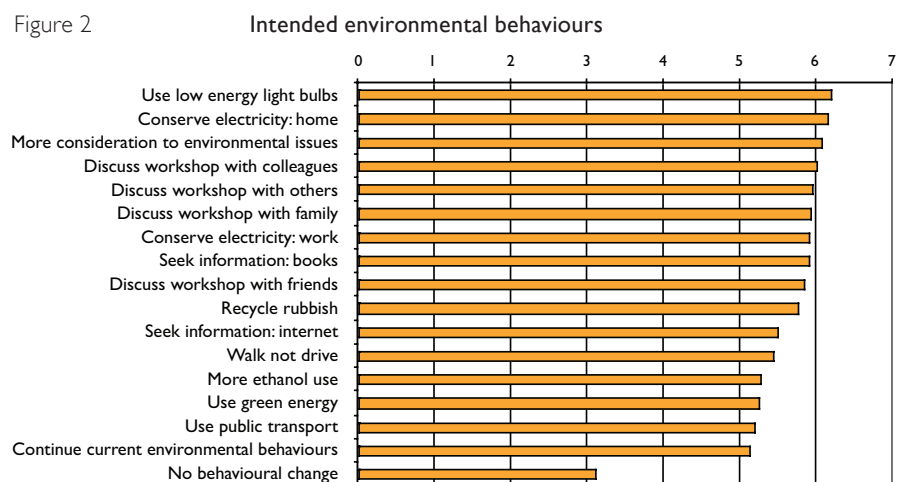
In 2007, CSIRO conducted a number of climate change and energy workshops in Muswellbrook and Singleton on behalf of Coal & Allied. CSIRO will continue to engage with these communities into 2009.

In late 2007, CSIRO held workshops in Muswellbrook and Singleton. In each community, one workshop was conducted with community leaders while the second was with members of the general public. The aim of the research was to understand the attitudes of community members towards climate change and energy technologies, and to explore effective methods for Coal & Allied to engage with the local community on the issue of its proposed energy efficiency initiatives in the region.

### Values and beliefs about the environment

The workshops explored participants' values and beliefs about the environment and how these values translated into their own behaviour. It was found that almost half the participants (47.2%) believed the environment was more important than the economy (Figure 1). Further questioning revealed that participants overall had a pro-environmental focus, with this attitude being slightly stronger in the Muswellbrook groups. However, when participants were questioned about their own environmental behaviour, the response was mixed with the use of low energy light bulbs being

Figure 2



Likert scale - 1 = Strongly disagree to 7 = Strongly agree

the most frequently reported behaviour overall (Figure 2). However, almost half (47.73%) of participants rated themselves as more energy efficient than similar households.

### Willingness to accept change

Participants were asked about their willingness to accept change to address environmental issues and what sort of changes they would accept. The strongest support was for individual action at home to reduce energy consumption and for a greater use of renewable energies (Figure 3).

Although participants were willing to pay more for electricity, the extra amount they were prepared to pay was quite low. There was a strong feeling among participants that governments should intervene to change people's energy consumption behaviour.

### Attitudes towards greenhouse gas emissions and climate change

The workshops further explored participants' attitudes towards greenhouse gas emissions and climate change. The majority of participants in the workshops believed climate change was an important issue in Australia and should be addressed by urgent action. As in previous discussions, people saw a role for government to take the lead in addressing the issue of climate change mitigation. There was also a strong feeling that government and industry should play a greater role in energy conservation.

Figure 1 Values and beliefs about the environment

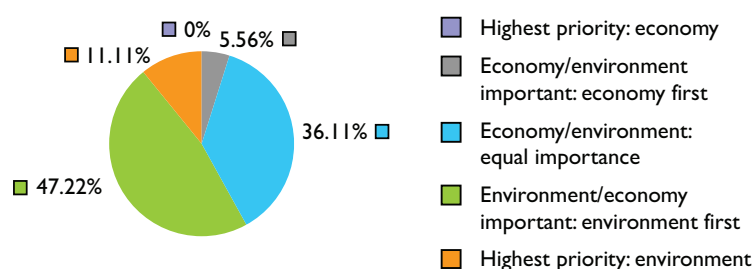
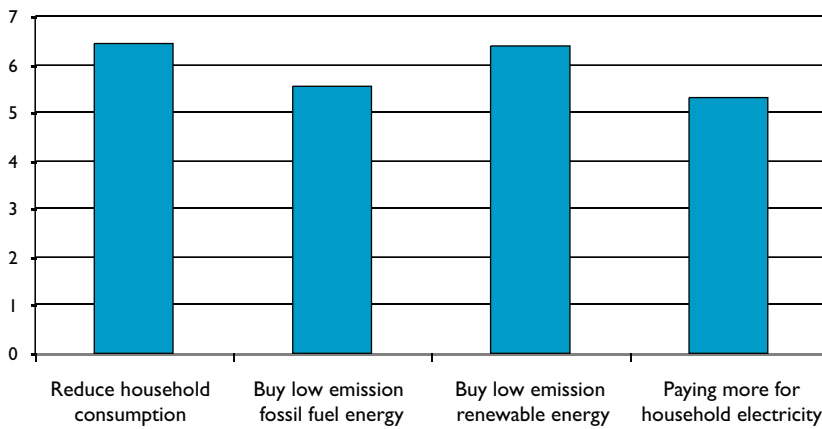
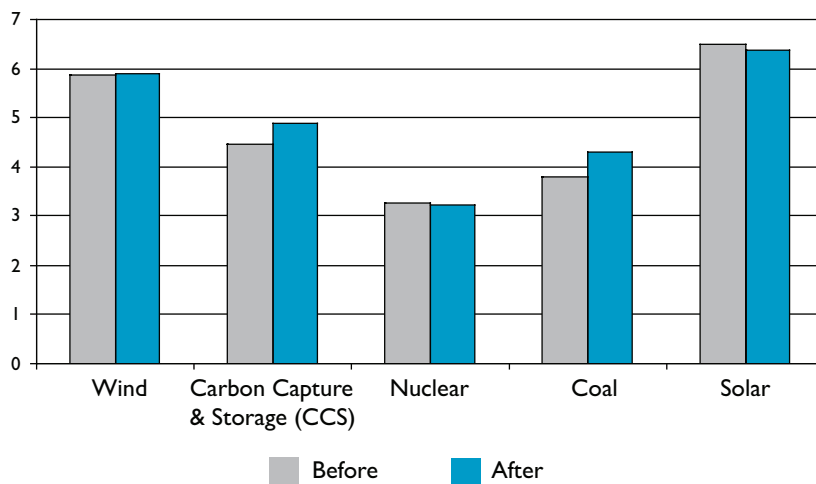


Figure 3 Reduce household energy consumption



Likert scale: 1 = Would not accept to 7 = Would accept

Figure 4 Attitude change: Energy source



Likert scale - 1 = Strongly disagree to 7 = Highly agree

### Attitudes towards energy sources and technology

Workshop participants were asked about their attitude towards energy sources and technologies. Solar and wind power were both strongly supported while most people were less favourable towards the use of coal.

When carbon dioxide capture and storage (CCS) technology was raised, as a way of reducing emissions from coal and gas fired power stations, most participants knew little about this technology and were interested in learning more.

At the end of the workshops participants reported their knowledge of energy sources had increased. With this increased knowledge came an increase in people's support for the use of coal and CCS technology (Figure 4).

### Methods for engaging communities on climate change and energy

Workshop participants were also questioned about their attitude towards sources of information they received on climate change and energy. Although people tended not to trust information

from industry or government, they expressed an interest in government and industry bodies consulting them about environmental issues.

Overall participants expressed the need for leadership and education from research bodies such as CSIRO to bring about change in people's attitudes and behaviours towards the issue of climate change and the use of energy.

Report back workshops with participants will be held in both communities in October 2008. Coal & Allied has asked the CSIRO to continue facilitating these workshops and associated activities into 2009.

#### For further information:

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