

# Flannery frustrated by BlueScope plans

### Connor Pearce

ONE of Australia's leading environmentalists has said it was "frustrating" to see BlueScope continue with plans to reline blast furnace No.6, rather than adopt green steel technologies, but the Australian steelmaker has told investors it needs the electricity equivalent to the entirety of Sydney to produce green steel.

Speaking at a conference of environmental educators at the University of Wollongong last week, Professor Tim Flannery said the Port Kembla steelmaker "frustratingly" chose to continue with its plans to reline No.6 blast furnace and continue using coal in steelmaking.

"To continue on with a highly polluting form of steel production rather than find a transition," he said.

BlueScope confirmed it would spend over \$1 billion to reline the No.6 blast furnace in its yearly financial results in August, with CEO Mark Vassella stating that there was no other viable option available.

"It's not just a technology solution, this is very much dependent on renewable energy, it's dependent on hydrogen - depending on which technology you use - the availability of raw materials and public policy," he said in August.

In a presentation to investors as part of the release of its sustainability report for the 2023 financial year,

BlueScope identified that it would need 15 times the current amount of electricity to transition the Port Kembla steelworks to make the same volume of steel using hydrogen-powered direct reduced ironmaking (DRI) technology.

Australia's build out of renewable electricity infrastructure is currently stalling due to opposition to new transmission infrastructure, with farmers in Victoria, Queensland and NSW protesting high voltage transmission lines across their paddocks.

An alternative lies in the offshore wind zone proposed for the Illawarra, which would provide large quantities of renewable electricity for BlueScope and the Illawarra. The zone as currently proposed has a indicative generative capacity of 4.2

gigawatts, and assuming a 45 per cent capacity factor - i.e. the wind turbines are spinning 45 per cent of the time - this would produce 1.89 gigawatts, or 1890 megawatts.

Across a year, which includes 8760 hours, the wind farm would produce 16,556,400 MWh - covering the BlueScope requirement for 11,250,000 MWh - with the remaining 5 million megawatt hours to be fed back into the grid.

With the Illawarra community split over the proposed offshore wind zone, Professor Flannery - who lives in the Illawarra - said there were positive and

negative impacts with any proposal, and suggested that adopting a holistic approach was necessary.

"We need to ask ourselves what are the consequences if everyone in Australia said no to wind turbines," he said.

"It's not just about what they see, it's about the impacts of their actions on the wider world. I don't think they'll be very proud if in years to come, as climate change gets worse, if you said no."



Professor Tim Flannery criticised BlueScope's decision to reline its No.6 blast furnace in Wollongong this week. Picture by Robert Peet