

Submission Re: Wilpinjong Extension Project RO39-16

Dear Sir/ Madam

I am writing to you on behalf of the Environmentally Concerned Citizens of Orange (ECCO) to lodge an objection to the above project. ECCO is a community based, not for profit organisation launched in April 2006 and made up of volunteers committed to promoting environmental values in Orange and surrounding district. As such we are advocates for action on climate change, and the preservation of biodiversity. The Wilpinjong Extension Project represents a threat to both these vital environmental aspects.

Biodiversity: The development of the proposed mine will inevitably have a major impact on habitat which involves part of the range of the threatened regent honeyeater, which has been classified as critically endangered. A suggestion that mine rehabilitation be considered as an adequate offset is not acceptable. If the mine is to proceed, it would mean the removal of 354 ha of remnant vegetation, impacting 24 threatened species, as well as affecting surrounding creeks and rivers.

Also unacceptable is the proposal to extend open cut mining into the Munghorn Gap Nature Reserve, especially without the protection of buffers.

Justification for a new mine: There is little evidence to support the establishment of new coal mines. Australia has a global commitment to reduce greenhouse gases, embodied in its signatory to the Paris Agreement. The exploitation of new coal will further compromise our efforts to reduce our carbon footprint, as the project is estimated to produce 20.4mt of greenhouse gases per year until 2033. If approved, the immensity of the project represents environmental and climate damage of a scale which will cause unacceptable harm to generations to come.

In addition, such a project may become redundant and represent a stranded asset, as the world moves closer to a renewable energy future. A massive new coal mine cannot be justified when it is now possible to access and profitably invest in clean energy.

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage: It has been documented that the proposed mine extension would destroy 92 Aboriginal artefacts and place a further 138 in jeopardy. This is an unacceptable impact on the Aboriginal cultural heritage of the area.

Social impact on the Wollar District: The mine expansion will result in an encroachment to within 1.5 kilometres of Wollar Village, which will be the demise of this community, as the mine activity will make living in the area impossible.

In conclusion we urge you not to allow this proposal to proceed. There is no longer any justification for such a project. It is environmentally, economically and socially unviable and should be rejected as such.

Nick King, President