To the Independent Planning Commission on the proposed Bylong coal mine.

I am writing in opposition to the coal mine.  It should not be approved.

The Bylong Valley is spectacularly beautiful, rich in heritage and a productive agricultural district with highly constrained water availability.  It is thus valuable to present and future generations.  It is the wrong place for a coal mine.

Now is also the wrong time to approve a new coal mine.  We are no longer able to claim innocence or even ignorance though many figureheads in this country wear this persona in public.  You will, I hope, be familiar with the recent IPCC report (not just as a throwaway political joke), the very recent WWF report on the rate of environmental destruction and the rising global concern about the toll exacted by coal power on air quality and human health (and healthcare costs).

My points of objection are:

1. The Department of Planning final assessment report fails to adequately consider:

    - threats to the Bylong River and connected groundwater, threats to other         water users and agricultural production

    - threats to state significant heritage landscape values of Bylong Valley

    - threats to ongoing farming enterprises including the pioneering natural         sequence farming techniques at Tarwyn Park which have great value             for much needed improvements to Australian agricultural practice in a         climate-changing world;

    - threats to the Wollemi National Park and Greater Blue Mountains World         Heritage Area;

    - cumulative loss of Aboriginal cultural heritage, biodiversity and         community in the region due to mining.

2. The Bylong Valley has been an important source of drought fodder for many years. This production is reliant on an adequate source of water to grow lucerne and pasture.This is put at risk by the requirements of the proposed mine.

3. The Independent Planning Commission has a duty to consider the IPCC 1.5 degrees report that was handed down on the same day as the Bylong final assessment report. Keeping global warming below 1.5 degrees means phasing out coal.  Australia is blessed with alternative sources of energy including a wonderful opportunity to develop hydrogen fuel for export with rich returns in jobs and money.  Australia and South Korea need to phase out coal burning by 2030 to meet Paris commitments. This mine is incompatible with Australia's and the world's medium to long term environmental, economic and human priorities.

4. This mine has a life span up to 2044 and is not consistent with NSW Government policy which states that, “The NSW Government endorses the Paris Agreement and will take action that is consistent with the level of effort to achieve Australia’s commitments to the Paris Agreement.”  Was the NSW Government faking commitment?

5. There is no clear or properly costed justification for Bylong Coal Mine. The long term environmental, social and economic impacts including loss of farming capability into the future have not been considered.

6. The loss of 400 ha of prime agricultural land consisting of fertile soils overlaying good groundwater cannot be rebuilt on mine rehabilitation. There is no precedent for this scale of prime land reconstruction anywhere. Likewise the proposed reconstruction of 65 ha of critically endangered ecological community on the rehabilitated open cut mine site is a deeply cynical proposal.  The proponents cannot point to a successful example of such reconstruction because it is not possible to do this (with any sense of reasonable costs and technical skills and ecological manipulation) on the mine subsidence area. Is this a fake commitment?

7.  The cumulative loss of threatened species habitat, particularly of the

critically endangered Regent Honeyeater, has not been assessed.  Are our environment protection laws another fake commitment?

8. The potential impact of subsidence from the underground mine has been underestimated and is acknowledged to be a problem.

I request the Commission to honour the intent of the relevant legislation and recommend against the proposed mine.

Regards Helen Clemens