This is a submission on the Bylong Coal Mine.

I call on the Independent Planning Commission to reject the mine based on the damage it will inflict on the agriculture and environment of NSW, and because the long-term viability of this mine is questionable.

A proper cost-benefit analysis of this mine must include the long term, wide-ranging, impacts on agriculture, the equine industry, and the environment. The open cut and underground mines will replace productive land that would otherwise increase in value as climate change will have serious adverse effects on other agriculture & grazing areas both in NSW and other parts of Australia. The present drought is a perfect illustration of this point. Farms in the Bylong Valley grow crops that are used for fodder which is transported to drought affected areas.

Water usage is a critical component in the assessment of the costs of this mine. The impact of the mine on both ground and underground water resources extending beyond the Bylong valley cannot be ignored. The risk that this mine could have to our scarce water resources in a climate changed world cannot be overstated - one fact that is well known is that coal mining uses vast quantities of water.

The conclusion should be that there has not been a proper evaluation of the full social, economic and environmental costs of the proposed mine.

Developments in Australia’s coal export markets raise serious risks of stranded asset

South Korea is phasing out the use of thermal coal and closing down coalfired power stations in favour of the use of renewables and gas for electricity generation. This is driven by the falling price of renewables and the problems of air pollution in South Korea. The need to combat rising levels of air pollution is prompting South Korea to turning away from Australian thermal coal in favour of coal with a lower sulphur content. I refer the IPC to the IEEFA report “NSW Thermal Coal Exports Face Permanent Decline” November 2018. What does this mean for the long-term viability of the mines in the Bylong Valley?

NSW does not need to be left with stranded assets in a damaged environment. The implications for the future cost impacts on NSW citizens are significant.

Stranded mine assets will be accompanied by corporate bankruptcy leaving dubious prospects for adequate rehabilitation of damaged agriculture land. What will be the prospects for proper rehabilitation of a stranded asset? Across mining regions of Australia concerns are being voiced that State Governments will be left with the financial burden of rehabilitating seriously degraded land abandoned by mining and extraction industries.

Added to these burdens will be the social and economic burdens workers and communities that are associated with the stranded mine assets. This will generate another form of financial burden that will flow on the State Governments in the form of reduced tax revenues and increased support expenditure.

State governments such as NSW, need to protect its agricultural resources and concentrate on how to transition its workforce to industries that are viable in the changing world economy.

In conclusion, there is evidence that approval of this mine is not in NSW’s best interest. Any short-term benefits of the mines are far outweighed by the cost of the mine to other parts of the NSW economy and the mounting evidence that it will indeed become a future liability rather than an asset.