

Objection to Wollongong Coal Ltd's Revised Underground Expansion Project (Major Project 09-0013)

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Some of the reasons I object to this project;

- I have lived in the Northern Illawarra for almost fifty five years, including some time in Russell Vale, not far from the colliery, at a time when coal was sent away by rail, then by trucks which ran very frequently to and from the mine.
- I have witnessed coal pollution in the creek, which ran through my back yard at the time.
- The noise emanating from the mine when in full production could be heard for kilometres.
- Fine coal dust (admittedly not all from this mine) covered everything, as it still does across the Illawarra. As coal will be processed on site, and as additional stock piles are required, more dust pollution and noise is inevitable.
- Previous mitigation measures have not successfully addressed these problems, nor will those envisaged for this new development. *THIS MINE IS SIMPLY TOO CLOSE TO RESIDENTIAL AREAS and should close.*

There is no real benefit economically or socially to the Illawarra or NSW or Australia in this proposal.

- The company does not pay tax.
- Very few additional jobs will be generated.
- The coal produced is not needed and will not be used in Australia.
- Trucking the coal away will result in more noise, traffic congestion, exhaust pollution and road surface degradation at an accelerated rate; all costs to be borne by taxpayers.
- Illawarra roads are already very congested and inadequate for existing traffic, with quite limited access across the Illawarra due to the long narrow coastal plain. Weekend and holiday traffic and regular accidents on the only major road between Russel Vale and the coal loader already cause major delays and disruption.
- Additional truck movements will inevitably result in more traffic congestion.
- The Federal government will have to pay the considerable costs of emissions abatement, i.e. tax payers, as the company pays no company tax and will likely contribute nothing to abatement costs.
- The project will contribute to global warming, at a time when the world needs to urgently reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

However, the **GREATEST PROBLEM** I see which is posed by this proposal is that the workings will be under the water catchment, which supplies water to both the Illawarra and to Sydney.

- That any mining under a major water catchment and storage area supplying Australia's major city has ever been allowed verges on insanity.
- Previous under-catchment mining has resulted in subsidence of the land surface in many areas, along with drainage of surface water (loss of stored drinking water).
- I have canoed in the Nepean River near Wilton while great bubbles of gas exploded out of the water under the boat; greenhouse gases escaping from a mining crack while water drained into it.
- With a drying climate why is drinking water conservation not the major priority?
- Due to the geology of the area to be mined if this project is allowed, increased water loss is inevitable.

- Loss of surface water threatens habitats and biodiversity in the catchment. The catchment is a major protected area for wildlife, whose importance can scarcely be overstated. Wildfires are of increasing concern. This project increases those threats.
- Eventually this drained water will emerge from the mine into Bellambi creek, increasing its flow substantially, increasing creek bank erosion & probably occasional flood risk.
- Why should we accept any further loss of fresh water supply, when there is no obvious gain of any kind?

The catchment contains many aboriginal occupation and art sites.

- Much of the art is considered to be at least 10,000 years old and is of cultural and scientific significance.
- Since I first visited many of the rock art sites, surface subsidence has badly damaged or destroyed many of them. Bush fires have damaged many others. Mining beneath, and the loss of surface water which has resulted in habitat change is directly responsible for much of this damage and cultural loss.
- Inevitably, extending mining under this area will result in more sites being damaged or lost.

Hopefully the lesson of Rio Tinto in the Pilbara is a wake up call to government that such losses are no longer acceptable to Australians, or to the World. Our local aboriginal heritage is no less important than that of the Pilbara.