Submission to IPC re Russell Vale Mine expansion

Peter Sainsbury 11 October 2020

Thank you for inviting my submission.

More mining that destroys the local environment and ecosystems; more fossil fuels that destroy people’s health and lives; are these what the world needs now? No, these are certainly not what we need now or at any future time.

What we need is an environmentally sustainable society and economy. What we need is to stop approving more of last-century's technology so that fossil fuels can continue to pollute the skies and water, pump more greenhouse gases into the atmosphere and kill people.

What we really need right now is to increase the roll out globally of cheap, clean, healthy, environmentally sustainable renewable energy. What we need is to stop letting fossil fuel companies bully and bribe their way through proper democratic processes and sound policy making. What we need is a clear commitment with a proper plan for NSW to become carbon neutral by 2040 so that developing countries have a chance to do some catching up socially and economically and themselves become carbon neutral by 2050. What we need is for the NSW government and its agencies to play their part in this transition by stopping all development of fossil fuels.

I imagine that you are fully aware that coal kills people but, as a public health doctor, just let me remind you of the fact. Coal kills people when it is burnt by producing atmospheric pollution with particulate matter, oxides of nitrogen and sulphur, and heavy metals. These toxic pollutants cause multiple diseases in humans (most notably diseases of the cardiac, respiratory and vascular systems) and much premature, completely unnecessary death. Coal kills people when it is burnt by producing carbon dioxide, the major cause of global warming and climate change. Global warming and climate change are already causing injuries, disease and premature death all around the world, and in NSW, and this is only going to get worse as global warming increases.

The only question is, how much worse is global warming going to get? The answer to that question principally depends on how many more tons of greenhouse gases we pump into the atmosphere - completely unnecessarily and irresponsibly pump into the atmosphere when there are perfectly viable clean, healthy technologies available now to replace fossil fuels. How much longer will governments and their agencies bury their heads in the sand and keep recklessly approving coal projects. Let us be under no illusions: coal kills people. Anyone involved with the mining, transport or burning of coal is contributing to killing people. Anyone involved with approving the mining, transport or burning of coal is making a decision to approve the killing of people. No one who is a party to any such approvals will ever be able to honestly say ‘I did not know’.

There is no need to approve the Russell Vale Mine expansion. The world does not need the coal - there is enough of that already. The world does not need the deaths that burning the coal will cause. NSW does not need the destruction of the environment that the mine will cause.

Thank you.