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**Russell Vale Underground Expansion Project**

I object to this expansion. It poses an unacceptable risk to Sydney and Wollongong's water catchment, to the environmental values of the Illawarra Escarpment and to the health of nearby residents.

Water security is paramount in the face of a changing climate. The mining will take place in specially designated Special Areas of the catchment. The upland swamps in these areas must not be allowed to dry out as they ensure ongoing reliability in our water supply.

NSW has committed to zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 so it's necessary to stop any new mine construction or mine expansions. Coal must be phased out quickly. This mine is particularly gassy and will contribute disproportionately to carbon emissions. None of the coal it produces is used in the Port Kembla steelworks as it is all exported.

Wollongong Council has declared a Climate Emergency and has adopted a Climate Mitigation Plan. Approving more mining is not consistent with this plan. It could  reduce water flowing into our waterways and increase the likelihood of bushfire on the escarpment.

The Russell Vale mine has been out of action for some time as versions of this proposal have been considered and refused. It should be permanently closed. It is located too close to a residential area and transporting the coal puts an unacceptable load on local roads. Residents will be subject to further noise and air pollution leading to respiratory problems.

The company Wollongong Coal has not met compliance requirements, including allowing coal ash into Bellambi Creek. It has been in financial difficulties over recent years and has laid off workers a number of times. It is not a good corporate citizen.

Overall the risks are highly unacceptable and there are too many of them.

Yours sincerely

Helen Wilson