**The proposed Russell Vale Colliery Underground Expansion Project should NOT be allowed to proceed.  I base this comment on health and safety issues.**

There is a large and growing suburban population (more than 24,000) in the towns immediately around the Russel Vale area.  There are three schools very close to the colliery:  Russel Vale Pre-School (150 meters), Aspect South Coast School (750 meters) – this is a school for kids ages 4 to 17 who have autism, and Russel Vale Public School (950 meters). We can add to this list, Illawarra Diggers Aged & Community Care (about 1 Km), the Anglicare Eileen Armstrong House (2 Km), and the Marco Polo Nursing home which is about 2 Km from the colliery site.

The colliery is the closest to a residential area of any colliery in Australia.  Particulate pollution (coal dust) will increase substantially with the expansion and will have negative impacts on health – particularly of the elderly and the young.

Coal trucking will involve 17 loaded trucks per hour, that is 34 truck movements per hour, down Bellambi Lane and Memorial Drive down to the port. This represents a high level of noise pollution.

The Special Areas of the Greater Sydney Water Catchment supplies water to 5 million residents of Wollongong, Sydney and the Blue Mountains.  The Special Areas are off-limits to the public to keep the water supply pristine.  They should also be off limits for mining companies, given the risk to water quality and safety.

Economic benefits to the area are questionable. I note that Wolllongong Coal is majority owned by an overseas company and that the coal is to be exported from the area. More importantly, Wollongong Coal is financially constrained and in no position to ensure its responsibility for remediation of the environment going forwards. It also has a poor safety record.

Wollongong Council seeks to attract new high-tech companies, their staff, and families to this area. It rightly espouses the idea that the area has unique natural beauty, flora, and fauna, as well as a special Aboriginal history. It offers a great lifestyle for young families. Why then risk the region’s reputation by allowing a coal mine to reopen on an expanded basis?