

Independent Planning Commission's Public Hearing for the Russell Vale Underground Expansion Project. 20/10/20

My name is Amy Stewart, I live in Corrimal.

My main points of concern are:

- Negative impacts of colliery on health and safety,
- Negative environmental impacts,
- Damaging effects on Wollongong Council's push to attract new industry,

Negative impacts of colliery on health and safety of the community

Russell Vale is a suburban area, its not an appropriate location for an expanded colliery.

Its the closest colliery to a residential area anywhere in Australia. We are a dense residential community with over 24,000 people living in the surrounding five suburbs with 11 schools, 4 nursing homes, and the Bulli District Hospital.

Residents have suffered noise and particulate pollution from this mine for many years. Coal dust on windowsills and walls from coal stored on the colliery's land is an ongoing health issue even in a nonoperational mine. The new development will expand the stockpiled coal surface area, increasing particulate pollution and the risk of respiratory and associated detrimental health issues. The older and younger members of our community will be at particular risk.

Wollongong Coal was forced to cease mining at Wongawilli in 2019 - with huge job losses when the Resources Regulator found it was not safe for workers. Russell Vale colliery mine workers recently voiced concerns that the mine has been neglected by Wollongong Coal and will "turn into a death trap." There have been a number roof collapse incidents in the past 12 months.

Wollongong Coal have a history of non-compliance such as the failure to realign and perform flood mitigation works on Bellambi Gully Creek. In 1998, residents downstream were inundated by coal pollution and run-off due to flooding. Further examples of non-compliance include failure to build sound walls and over-stockpiling of coal.

Negative environmental impacts:

The plan proposes a third seam of coal to be mined beneath two previously mined seams. The NSW government must be aware that mining under the water catchment that serves 5 million people of Greater Sydney is an unacceptable risk.

The mining expansion will drain both surface and ground water from the Cataract Reservoir catchment. This dewatering will worsen the effects of drought and climate change, reducing the ability to sustain the region's unique native flora and fauna.

The draining of ground and surface water caused by mining could make the Cataract Reservoir catchment area, drier and more flammable. Increasing the bushfire risk, not only around Cataract Reservoir, but also along the Illawarra Escarpment.

Damaging effects on Wollongong Council's push to attract new industry

I have worked with Wollongong Council on their '[Invest Wollongong](#)' campaign. This forms part of their Economic Development Strategy, having an ambitious target of creating 10,500 new high-paying jobs over the next decade. The campaign is marketed to businesses and families in Sydney, the ACT and Melbourne to consider Wollongong as 'one of the best places to live in the world!'

The Council's campaign highlights the natural beauty of the region, and emphasises the diversity of forest types, range of flora and fauna, and a strong Aboriginal heritage.

I quote "Our natural surroundings are truly spectacular. ... We love living here, and we know that you, your family, colleagues and staff will love it too."

Coal mining flies in the face of this quote.

The Council, patently knows the value and unique biodiversity of the area to the community, whilst at the same time, is willing to risk all of it for a 5-year investment that provides no local remuneration, and only 205 jobs.

I work for a large global tech company; its head office is based in Wollongong and employs over 100 people in the area. We are Wollongong Council's supposed target market. Modern industries and young families in 2020 do not see coal mining as a clean, sustainable industry, so why would they locate to Wollongong?

Finally. In July of this year, The Illawarra Mercury published an article stating that "*The state's mining regulator has quietly shelved an investigation into whether Wollongong Coal is "fit and proper" to hold a mining licence*". We still do not know the outcome of these investigations. These findings must be freely available to the public before any decisions are made.

The Russell Vale Underground Expansion Project is not in the public's interest. I ask that you reject this application from Wollongong Coal and recommend a process to close the mine at Russell Vale permanently and remediate the land for community-based development.

Thankyou