**Submission to the Independent Planning Commission - Russell Vale Underground Expansion**

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I firmly object to the proposed underground expansion project of Wollongong Coal at Russell Vale.

First and foremost, my objection is based on the grounds of the existential threat the expansion of the mine for not only Wollongong, but to Australia and beyond. The impacts of mining on greenhouse gas emissions are proven and we have reached a point when we must shut down, not expand, mining projects. We cannot, with any conscience to future generations - or the environment - allow developments like this to proceed.

Beyond the project’s potentially adverse impacts on climate change through additional greenhouse gas emissions, there are other threats from the proposed project to future generations such as the loss of ground and surface water from the Cataract Reservoir catchment and increased bushfire risk as a result of the drying of the catchment. Water is indeed gold. We recognise this to a degree by protecting our catchment areas from most aspects of human influence. It is unbelievable that we are failing to protect them from mining. Now must be our tipping point where we stand up for the essential ecosystem services our natural world (and we!) need to survive. There must be no more mining in water catchments.

We must create a world where the above objections are enough to stop this and similar projects. We must stand up for our environment now. As Robert Swan has said “the greatest threat to our planet is that someone else will save it”. We must act now. We must be the ones who end not just the expansion of mining, but all mining – and especially in water catchments.

Beyond the existential threat to climate change and water security that this project brings, as a resident of the Northern Suburbs of Wollongong I am aware of additional local reasons to object to the project. Particulate pollution is a real issue for communities near mines and Russell Vale is no exception. An expansion of the mine (indeed any mine!) is not appropriate in what is a suburban residential area. Local creeks have been polluted by mines in the escarpment and regularly feature in the media. Coal dust lines the roofs of local houses and affects resident’s health. Jobs need to be generated in renewable energy, not mining. Any supposed economic benefit is a false economy – one that fails to account for the environmental impacts t hat will occur for generations.

I ask that you reject this application, and furthermore, that you recommend a process to close the mine at Russell Vale permanently.

Bronwyn Batten