

I have moved to this beautiful area with my Aussie husband and our small kids just a year ago. When we arrived, there was a water shortage. This was followed by heavy smoke from bushfires most of the summer. Many Australians have asked me in the bushfire summer when I first arrived here if I enjoyed Australia. I thought that was a hard question because, sitting in my smokey house with my kids and avoiding going outside because of hazardous air quality levels for weeks is not what I pictured it to be like to live in Australia. I am objecting to the proposed project because I want that my children and their children can grow up in an Australia where breathing healthy air in summer is still deemed to be normal not the exception.

When I heard that NSW is considering to approve coal mining under our water catchment area right next to a residential area close to us I was stunned: after this summer's experience I would have guessed that projects that **increase water shortages** and **increase bushfire risk** would surely find it hard to get government support.

I was more surprised that there are not much positives: the project only creates 205 mining jobs, not very much in royalties (I believe in the region of 33MM AUD), the coal will be exported and that the mining company is so much in debt they even delisted from the stock exchange.

Residents and a school are within several hundred meters of this mine and they will be heavily affected by air and noise pollution.

Russell Vale would be in the top 100 largest emitters of Scope 1 emissions in Australia. This is a gassy mine, meaning a lot of methane would be released into the atmosphere during mining. Scientists tell us we are the last generation to stop climate change before reaching dangerous tipping points. Methane is more than 28 times more potent than CO2 in the first two decades after its release. Not a good time to emit more since we have not yet developed any good capture technologies.

From my own experience I know that we have to be very careful with projects that can have an impact on water supply if they go wrong:

I grew up in a small town in Germany (Wolfenbützel) where 10km away from my house, intermediate radioactive waste was stored in a former salt mine, the Asse.

The idea was to store the nuclear waste there in a safe manner for the next 1 Million years as research suggested the mine would be safe forever. **In 1972** officials claimed that the **ingress of water can be ruled out** with a **probability bordering on certainty**.

Unfortunately only a few decades later, water started to get into the mine and now it is at risk of collapsing and of risk of polluting the ground water.

So in 2013 it has been decided the nuclear waste will be taken out of the mine at **tax payers costs**. **At the moment the costs are expected to be AUD 5bn** but it is worth it: **water is precious**.

Please find details of this extraordinary expensive mistakes politicians made 50 years ago in the attached article:

<https://euobserver.com/beyond-brussels/132085>

In Russell Vale, the mining will take place in the Special Areas of the Greater Sydney Water Catchment – areas that forbid public access because of their sensitivity and strategic importance. This project will lead to loss of water and can have water quality impacts. Coal is full of heavy metals and radioactive substances.

Water NSW says in their latest annual report that the impacts of underground coal mining are complex and difficult to quantify.

If something goes wrong this can affect **the water supply of 5 Million people**. Wollongong Coal is a company with critical solvency concerns and at the risk of going bankrupt. It is obvious that tax payers will pay the bill if something goes wrong.

If this was going ahead, Wollongong Coal needs a stable guarantor, ideally an insurance company to pay for any unforeseen damages but also for any expected damages:

Water outflow above Russell Vale will continue to flow, for more than 150 years as a result of the mining. The outflow will need to be managed and treated. Wollongong Coal is proposing a commitment to do this for 10 years. Again tax payers are expected to pay for the long term damage. There should be no expiration date to clean up for the mess a company creates.

All possible future costs to our community need to be taken into account. The few jobs you would be creating are not the jobs of the future. The miners will need to retrain at some stage.

The Russell Vale project has not many benefits and high costs to present and future generations. In my opinion risk-reward stand in no sensible relationship for this project.

The jobs that you would be creating are jobs without a future by a company that no longer believes in mining coal:
<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/companies/jindal-steel-power-aims-to-cut-debt-to-half-by-fy23/article32484073.ece>