

Submission to the IPC on the Russell Vale Colliery Expansion

Thank you for this opportunity to make a submission.

The Wilderness Society Illawarra formed in 2016 as part of a national movement to build local community groups to organise for the natural world and to act on climate change.

In our four years of activity we have had two constant themes:

- Mitigation of the climate emergency, and
- Acting to end the extinction crisis

We have spoken with thousands of local people during this time and we know that there is a widespread fear for the future of our planet if we do not begin to reverse the damage already inflicted by the fossil fuel industries.

The distinctive feature of the application by Wollongong Coal is that they will use bord and pillar mining rather than the longwall system. This is said to be less damaging to the water catchment. There is a growing awareness of the hazards of mining under the water catchment. There is growing resistance to allowing mining in water catchments at all.

There are at least three particular problems with the current Wollongong Coal proposal:

1. Less damage to the water catchment is not no damage. One recent local example being the destruction of the “Whale Cave” Aboriginal heritage site on the Escarpment by subsidence from bord and pillar mines.
2. There is a compounding hazard in this case. This application is to extend mining into a third seam of coal. That are stacked on top of each other. Two seams have already been mined above.
3. Approval of this proposal would in no way facilitate or contribute towards ecologically sustainable development.

Coastal Upland Swamps in the Special Areas of the water catchment are affected by subsidence caused by underground mining. The *WaterNSW Literature Review of Underground Mining Beneath Catchments* says:

♣ the Draining of swamps, will lead to: -

- drying and potential erosion and scouring of dry swamps –
- loss of standing pools within swamps –
- vulnerability to fire damage of dry swamps –
- change to swamp vegetation communities –
- adverse water quality impacts,

♣ Loss of stream baseflow

♣ Loss of swamp ecology both terrestrial and aquatic

♣ Loss of flow leads to the full range of downstream consequences

Swamps provide precious much-needed habitat for flora and fauna. It is likely there are species and relationships in these ecosystems of which we are completely unaware.

Vulnerable or threatened species that have been recorded in the community include:

- the Giant Burrowing Frog
- Red-crowned Toadlet,
- Rosenberg's Goanna and
- The Green and Golden Bell Frog

The Eastern Ground Parrot was once common on Maddens Plains. The swamps provide habitat for the endangered Giant Dragonfly which is now very uncommon in coastal regions.

This proposal would generate greenhouse gas emissions causing further harm to our climate system on which all people everywhere rely. Human-induced climate change is a key threatening process for these Coastal Upland Swamps. Further drying of these swamps by climate change also leaves them more vulnerable to bushfire. It would contribute to intergenerational inequity because it will leave younger people and future generations to pick up the pieces.

This proposal is not consistent with Ecologically Sustainable Development as it would cause further damage to already damaged and endangered coastal upland swamps.

We urge you to reject the proposal.

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