

Submission on the Wollongong Coal's Revised Underground Expansion Project for Russell Vale.

Thank you for your time and expertise which you bring to this Independent Planning Commission. My wife and I recognise you have a very difficult task which is so important for the environment and the future generations who will live and work in the Greater Wollongong and Greater Sydney areas.

We strongly object to the Wollongong Coal's Revised Underground Expansion Project for Russell Vale for the following reasons:

- Significant impact on Climate
- Contamination of our most precious resource
- Ecosystem degradation

Our concerns are explained as follows.

Significant impact on Climate due to additional Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions

You are well aware that Australia is highly vulnerable to climate change impacts like bushfires, drought and extreme heat. This coal mining expansion project will add to Australia's exposure to climate risks. We understand, if this Underground Expansion Project for Russell Vale goes ahead, it will contribute in excess of 300,000 tonnes of GHG to the NSW GHG inventory at a time when NSW Government policy requires a reduction in GHGs of 35% by 2030. This is working in the opposite direction and nulling about 12% of the intended reductions in all other areas of NSW industry and commerce. Australia cannot afford to increase any coal mining activities as this will negatively impact all species living on planet Earth. An alternative to this coal mining project is to focus on developing renewable sources of energy.

Contamination of our most precious resource

The mining will take place in the Special Areas of the Greater Sydney Water Catchment. The planned triple seam mining is particularly risky as this third seam of coal is being mined beneath two previously mined seams. Triple seam mining has little precedent and impacts are difficult to predict. The subsidence impacts of the proposed mining project may be much more serious than the Department of Planning has portrayed. A subsidence engineer expressed concern that the cumulative effect of the new project beneath two previously mined coal seams could trigger instability of "marginally stable pillars" in the overlying Bulli Seam mine. Once these areas have been mined, it will be impossible to mitigate any negative impacts on water quality. The people of Sydney and Wollongong and their future generations deserve to have their water catchments protected from current and future potential contamination.

Ecosystem degradation

The mining expansion will drain both surface and ground water from the Cataract Reservoir catchment. This dewatering, exacerbated by drought and climate change, will impact the biodiversity in the area. As the area dries out, it loses the ability to sustain native plants, animals, birds, reptiles and insects in the area. This will definitely happen if the project is approved. The reason we state this is, similar degradation of the ecosystem has already occurred due to mining underneath the catchment area for the Woronora Dam. Aquatic Ecology

Specialist Catherine Cunningham (Sydney Water) has studied and reported the devastating impact of long wall mining within Sydney's water catchment areas. The environmental and ecological impacts are described in her study entitled: 'The effect of subsidence from long wall coal mining on the ecology and water quality of streams'.

In conclusion, this project does not fill us with confidence that Wollongong Coal and the NSW Government will protect the environment for the sake of our children and their children. On a personal note, we are very concerned as our sister and partner, sister-in-law and her children live and work in Wollongong.

The proposed Russell Vale Underground Expansion Project is not in the public interest. We look forward to the Independent Planning Commission putting a stop to this project. We ask that you reject this application from Wollongong Coal and recommend a process to close the mine at Russell Vale permanently.

Regards

Adrian and Janine Polhill

10 Riverview Avenue, Kyle Bay, NSW

27th October, 2020