I object to the Russell Vale Underground Expansion Project.

I was born in Keiraville and spent my childhood roaming the Illawarra escarpment above the Russell Vale mine. I watched the glow from the furnaces of the Port Kembla Steelworks. I am well aware of the role which the coal mining industry has played in the development of the Illawarra region. However, the coal mining era is rapidly passing. What we need to focus on now as a nation is the protection of the natural environment and clean water, and the development of renewable energy. It is already possible to produce steel using hydrogen instead of coal, and this technology will soon be economically viable.

There are very many valid reasons why this Project should not be given approval. I will concentrate my comments today on the meeting held on the 14th of October between the IPC Commissioners and officials from the DPIE, and particularly on the issues of subsidence and greenhouse emissions.

Subsidence

Subsidence of mining areas under water catchment is a well-known cause of water loss. Cracks appear in the surface and the water just flows down into the mine. If the catchment area is a swamp it dries up and all the aquatic life it supports dies.

At around paragraph 30 of the transcript of this meeting is the statement *“seven of the 14 panels in the Bulli Seam have actually been fully collapsed at the completion of historical mining. 30 And therefore there’s no potential for further subsidence to occur as a result of those seam areas. There is some areas, seven of the panels within the Bulli Seam, that are not known to have definitely collapsed at this stage.”* And “*there is an area of about 200,000 metres squared which represents about 28 per cent of the area of swamp within the project area that are actually overlying that area where the Bulli Seam is yet to be confirmed to have subsided.”* I find these statements highly alarming in the light of further mining in the expansion area. I am not convinced that the risk of this happening has been categorised as “negligible”. I am cynical enough to believe that it has been thus categorised simply because that is what is required for the project to go ahead.

*Greenhouse emissions*

DPIE officials displayed a totally irresponsible attitude to Australia’s greenhouse emissions responsibilities under the Paris Agreement. Because this project is proposed for NSW, not “Australia”,they stated, “*we 10 ought not to be seeking to limit or condition those matters through the assessment of individual development applications in New South Wales and that matters of trade and – and compliance with international agreements are – are a matter for the country as a whole,”*

*“ it’s quite clear from that document that that doesn’t meant that individual 25 projects ought to be refused on the basis of greenhouse gas emissions; not that they – that’s not a relevant consideration.”*

It’s hard to get a handle on what the DPIE believes that Australia is constituted of. It’s not even that the DPIE believes “this little bit won’t count”. It’s as if it believes that Australia is somehow an entity that is not made up of states. As if somewhere there is land out there that is just “Australia”, not NSW or WA or ACT, where mining can be banned because it contravenes Australia’s international obligations under the Paris Agreement.

Commissioners, I urge you to reject this reckless and destructive Project.

Yours sincerely,

Bronwyn Vost.