I strongly object to this proposal to extend longwall mining under The Greater Sydney Water Catchment area for nearly 30 years. My objections are based on concerns raised by a NSW Government agency - WaterNSW - and evidence gathered by experts in hydrology, water quality and ecology.

The blatantly short-term benefits suggested by those supporting the extension of the mine are completely outweighed by the deleterious costs to the community in the future.

1. Loss of Volume of Drinking Water in the Greater Sydney Water Catchment

The proposal will deleteriously affect the volume of drinking water for the Greater Sydney region. Longwall mining has been shown to cause subsidence, damaging swamps and streams and reducing the volume of water they supply to the Nepean, Cordeaux and Avon Reservoirs. Dendrobium mine operations have already caused the greatest water loss of any mine operating in the Greater Sydney Water Catchment area. This extension is likely to result in the loss of millions of litres of water.

Only last year Sydney’s water supply was down to less than 50% capacity. Our continent is experiencing more extreme weather events; we don’t know when the next drought will occur; Sydney’s population is growing. We need to husband our natural sources of fresh water more carefully than ever.

The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) acknowledges that the expansion will cause damage (Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, Assessment Report, Dendrobium Mine Extension Project, State Significant Development SSD-8194, October 2020, (“DPIE Assessment Report” p. x, Accessed at: <https://www.ipcn.nsw.gov.au/projects/2020/10/dendrobium-extension-project-ssd-8194>)

The proposed extension is within supposedly protected “Special Areas” of the water catchment. It is totally irresponsible to sanction intentional damage to an area that has been designated of special significance for water catchment.

Two of the NSW Government’s own expert entities – the Independent Advisory Panel for Underground Mining and WaterNSW – have raised serious concerns about the proposal and reliability of the modelling of water loss.

2. Deterioration of Water Quality

Contaminated water can leak from abandoned mines for generations to come. Last week I heard a presentation by an expert in aquatic ecology and water quality who quoted very high levels of heavy metals entering freshwater streams from abandoned mines in the Blue Mountains and Southern Highlands. He demonstrated the virtual absence of aquatic fauna long distances downstream of the entry point of the pollution.

3. Damage to Upland Swamps

As a biologist who has visited areas of Upland Swamps south of Sydney, and listened to experts describing the ecology of these Endangered Ecological Communities, I am aware of how vulnerable they are to subsidence and resultant drying out. Not only does this impact directly on the special fauna and flora of the areas but it also leaves them much more vulnerable to bushfires.

https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/threatened-species/nsw-threatened-species-scientific-committee/determinations/final-determinations/2011-2012/coastal-upland-swamp-in-the-sydney-basin-bioregion-endangered-ecological-community-listing

These are just three of many reasons why I believe the Dendrobium Extension Project SSD 8194 should not be approved.