

I object to the expansion of Dendrobium Mine. I object to the increase in greenhouse gas emissions; the daily loss of millions of litres of drinking water; the increase in the risk of bushfires in the catchment and the escarpment in the city of Wollongong; I object to the air pollution and the pollution of waterways that will result from this expansion; I object to the damage to ecosystems, including the irreplaceable Upland Swamps, rainforest and koala habitat; and I object to the damage to the living cultural heritage of the Dharawal people, and the damage done to their Country.

Many people addressing this commission have asserted that the expansion of Dendrobium Mine is vital for the ongoing operations of the steelworks at Port Kembla. However, the water supply for five million people should take priority over mine expansion, especially now that there are options to manufacture steel without coal as an ingredient.

I would like to emphasise that offsets are not an appropriate mechanism to address water loss. The water catchment is a resource that can't be replaced by any amount of money, and certainly not be a second desalination plant or water treatment plant.

I think we should keep in mind that Bluescope Steel is just one of South 32's customers. Bluescope is part of the picture, but it is not the whole picture. Things are changing week to week in the coal industry and the steel industry. The application for this mine expansion is not being made in a stable and predictable context. The coal price is dropping, including the price for metallurgical coal, and mines are being closed or operations suspended. There are rapid technological developments in steel manufacturing happening globally, and low or zero carbon steel is being manufactured and is likely to attract a premium price as major steel markets commit to zero emissions targets. Meanwhile, we are facing longer and more severe droughts, and more heatwaves. Even more intense rainfall events associated with climate change are an issue for projects like this, as we saw when very heavy rain preceded the failure of one of South 32's tailings dams, with the result that Brandy and Water Creek, a waterway in a residential area, a creek that kids play in, was

polluted by this mine. It's not a good time to damage our water catchment in the pursuit of profits for the fossil fuel industry.

The damage that this expansion will cause outweighs the benefits it is hoped that it will create. The damage is certain. The benefits are uncertain. They are affected by a decreasing coal price, and a steel manufacturing industry in rapid technological change. The expansion of this mine MAY create short-term benefits for a relatively small group of people. I understand that we are talking about thousands of jobs – but there is good research to show that there are also thousands of jobs in decarbonisation – renewables, green steel and so on. And we are talking about the water supply for millions of people. Millions living in Sydney and Wollongong now, and who knows how many millions of people in the future as water continues to be lost, every single day, day after day after day. We know that we can expect this continent to get much drier. It's not a matter of offsetting water in the catchment by building another desal plant or fixing Sydney Water's leaky pipes. The reality is that we are going to need to do all those things. We are going to need every drop of rain that falls, plus desal and improvements in water infrastructure. If we allow ourselves to think clearly about the changes we're going to see in the coming years, we know we can't afford to lose millions more litres of drinking water every single day. We are better off transitioning to green steel right now than bearing the costs of increased greenhouse gas emissions. That is certainly going to be a challenge. But it can be done. The pathways to rapid decarbonisation with good jobs DO exist, but we have to TAKE those paths. It's not going to get easier. Now is the right time.