

IPC Speech - Dendrobium

To begin I'd like to pay my respects and acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today, for me that is the Wodi Wodi people of the dharawal nation.

I'd like to thank the Independent Planning Commission for allowing me the opportunity to speak in opposition to the Dendrobium Extension Project.

I am a concerned young person from the Illawarra, who is upset by how this expansion will directly impact both the future of our local environment and the preservation of the rich cultural sites that we are so lucky to have in our area.

1. **Damage to valuable Aboriginal Cultural Heritage**

The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment[25] records and physical survey of only 6.91 % of the affected area in the proposed expansion, identified **58** Aboriginal heritage sites likely to be affected by longwall mining in Area 5 and Area 6. These were mostly rock shelters with/without art and deposits, and axe grinding groove sites located in creeks.

There has already been significant damage and destruction to some sites, including Whale Cave, where the damage was only uncovered when the Illawarra Aboriginal Land Council was granted access to the site for the first time in decades, as these sites sit within the Special Areas of the Water Catchment.

The Department of Planning, Industry & Environment's Biodiversity Conservation Division proposed changes to South32's mine design to avoid impacts to **six** of these Aboriginal heritage sites. However, changes were made by South 32 that would protect only **one** site.

There is no requirement to preserve or avoid these sites, and no penalties to South32 when it destroys them. To reiterate this point, these invaluable cultural sites will be under major risk of being destroyed by mining, whilst the area remains out-of-bounds for local Aboriginal communities.

The temporary monetary gain from this mine extension does not validate the immense destruction of Aboriginal Heritage sites. Some of these sites are thousands of years old, and could be lost in a mere matter of years. This potential loss is unacceptable and must not be overlooked.

Mining induced subsidence will damage the watercourses and swamps that feed our drinking water reservoirs

South 32 predicts that its 305 metre wide long wall panels in the extension may result in subsidence of 2 to 2.45m[4]. Previous mines of similar width have caused 2.5 to 3 m of subsidence, so South 32's prediction may be erring towards a best case scenario prediction.

The mining and associated subsidence will cause cracking of the land on the surface – including rivers, creeks, smaller watercourses and swamps that feed our drinking water reservoirs – and subsequent water loss to the catchment. This is irreversible damage.

The mining will come to within 300m of the Avon and Cordeaux Reservoirs. It will result in water losses from Avon, which is the sole source of water supply to over **310,000 residents** and businesses in the Illawarra region[6], as well as Cordeaux Reservoir, which along with Cataract Reservoir is the main water supply for **Camden, Campbelltown and Wollondilly council areas** and even as far afield as Nepean Reservoir, which is the water supply for the nearby towns of **Bargo, Thirlmere, Picton and The Oaks**.

All three affected reservoirs, Avon, Cordeaux and Nepean also supply water to Sydney.

It will take 100 years for groundwater levels to stabilise in Area 5 and 200 years for Area 6.[22] Thus the dewatering impacts of the mining will become the burden of my children & grandchildren who will also be suffering the incredible impacts of climate change through more extreme weather events, longer and more severe droughts and more serious bushfire risk.

This extension will continue the dewatering of the forest, bushland and swamps above the mine, making the area even more prone to bushfire. The water catchment was one of the few unburnt areas of bushland in the 2020 fires and it is imperative that it is protected from mining induced degradation.

Please consider the severe implications that the Dendrobium Extension Project will have, especially the environmental impacts, loss of water and destruction of Aboriginal heritage sites. My generation has already been tasked with the job of cleaning up your generation's mess and attempting to preserve our environment. Let's work together now to stop this becoming the burden of my children and grandchildren as well.

[25] Dendrobium Mine – Plan for the Future: Coal for Steelmaking. Appendix F: Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment. Niche Environment & Heritage (2019) Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment. pp 26,33-34, 68, 71-72. Accessed 01/09/2019 from:
<https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/project/9696>

[4] Subsidence Report for Dendrobium Mine, MSEC, 2019, pp 35 – 37, accessed at:
<https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/project/9696>

[6] WaterNSW Fact Sheet – Illawarra Water Security Project, November 2019, accessed 9.11.20 at:
https://www.waternsw.com.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/150757/Avon-Deep-Water-Access-Fact-Sheet-Nov-2019.pdf

[22] DPIE Assessment Report, op cit, p 105 - 106

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-10-02/illawarra-indigenous-sites-being-destroyed-behind-baricades/12717976>