

## IPC Talk re Mangoola Coalmine Extension Project

Commissioners ;Prof Snow Barlow, Peter Cochrane

Catherine Chicken

4.3.21

Intro: My name is Catherine Chicken. I would first like to pay my respects to the traditional owners past, present, and emerging of the land on which we stand. Thank you, Commissioners, for your time today. I would like to state clearly my objection to the Mangoola Coal Project before us today.

In the interests of disclosure, I am a consultant veterinarian with SEH and sit on the Upper Hunter Air Quality Advisory Committee as a non-coal/power industry representative. I am a local community resident of Scone with enormous concerns about the cumulative impact of YET ANOTHER coal mine on the health and well-being of the communities of the Upper Hunter, OUR communities.

I speak today, as I have at previous IPC hearings, as a deeply concerned Upper Hunter resident who feels that we have become sacrificial communities with respect to the unacceptable **negative** impacts of unchecked expansion of coal mining, in many cases, in alarmingly close proximity to our population centres. It is apparent from all previous recommendations by the NSW Planning Department to approve every coal mining proposal in this area, and the stark lack of **any** recommendations to refuse mining projects, that the planning process is in effect an approvals process, which does not take into account the very real concerns about cumulative impacts raised over many years by community members living here.

### CUMULATIVE IMPACT

The **cumulative** negative impacts each new mine has had on our region over the past 2 decades have **never** been adequately considered through the planning process. Given all proposals are assessed in a standalone manner, and each new mine is assessed from a base of the mines already operating, there is an amplification of the cumulative impacts with each new approval. To get to the current state where the township of Muswellbrook is encircled by open cut coal mines clearly illustrates the lack of adequate planning for the protection of the health and wellbeing of the members of our UH communities. Suffice to say, the cumulative impacts are plain for all of us who live here to see, hear,

breathe and at times even taste. Those of us still living here have had enough, many others have left. The impacts on us are very real, **every** day.

Specifically in relation to the Mangoola project, the impacts on air quality, water resources and the long-lasting legacy of open voids full of toxic mine waste are of grave concern.

## AIR QUALITY

We have become adept at monitoring air quality in this area through the Upper Hunter Air Quality Monitoring Network, installed in 2011 in response to community concerns over air quality in this region, in the face of increased coal mining activity. Despite the very effective monitoring of air pollution through the network, we are making no headway in improving the air quality of this area, in fact it is significantly worse in places now than a decade ago and the greatest impacts are occurring in the areas of greatest open-cut mining activity. This is evidenced by data generated from nearly 10 years of air quality monitoring by the network. **Annual** PM 2.5 levels in Muswellbrook have never been at, or under, the 8ug/m<sup>3</sup> NEPM benchmark since monitoring began in 2012, **with no prospect of that being achieved**. There is NO safe level of air pollution, yet the NSW government is content to allow the exacerbation of air pollution in our region by facilitating ongoing expansion of open cut coal mining.

Links:

<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/air/monitoring-air-quality/upper-hunter/upper-hunter-air-quality-reports>

<https://www.muswellbrookchronicle.com.au/story/6857600/validity-of-air-quality-monitoring-disputed/>

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-10-25/air-quality-stokes-community-pollution-fears-in-nsw-upper-hunter/11638418>

<https://www.muswellbrookchronicle.com.au/story/6918362/bust-the-dust-campaign-is-back/>

## ECONOMIC DIVERSITY

The effect of a coal mining footprint that continues to expand in our region, is not only a threat to the health and wellbeing of those of us living here, but also to the economic diversity of our region. On-going investment in existing sustainable agricultural industries and future investment by other sectors is stifled due to the constant threat of over-expansion of local coal mining.

Coal mining is an industry internationally recognised as being in structural long term decline.

Given the world is rapidly pivoting away from energy generation from fossil fuels, it would seem prudent to encourage investment in a diverse range of economic activities in our region and secure the prosperity of existing industries in order to transition away from coal mining and plan for a future where jobs are created for those who will not otherwise be provided for, by a coal mining industry in retreat.

We live in challenging climatic times and it is up to ALL of us to exercise our duty in addressing the very real threats climate change brings – approving more coal mines flies in the face of those responsibilities.

Commissioners, each new approval you permit, has a cumulative impact on US, the residents of this place as well as on humanity more broadly.

Enough is surely enough.

COMMISSIONERS, I respectfully ask you to PLEASE STOP THIS NOW.