Thank you...

My name is Eva Rizana. I spend the first 25 years of my life as a resident of Cullen Bullen and have been back for numerous occasions since.

My grandparent’s had two businesses in the town. A bakery in the 1960’s and the post office during the 70’s, 80’s and 90’s.

I’m grateful for the opportunity to be here today, to speak for myself and give my own personal reasons as to why I oppose the Coalpac Consolidation Project.

I want to begin by saying that I am for local jobs and employment opportunities, and know that the mining industry has played a vital role in the lives of many of the residents of Cullen Bullen.

However from my perspective the Coalpac Consolidation Project is not about mining, it’s about business and a desperate need to turn around a bad deal.
But for that to happen, as with everything in life there is a price to be paid and that price will be paid by the residents of Cullen Bullen, in terms of their standard of living and health. Clearly the environment will also pay a price.

For me personally, this is a case of you don’t know what you’ve got til it’s gone - or in this case under threat.

So what do I have that is now under threat?

I have a place that I call home. Cullen Bullen is where I grew up. It’s a place where I felt free to explore the surrounding hillsides - with friends, family or on my own. I know for sure that exploring the White Wash Caves has been a favourite activity for most local residents for many generations.

The family home which belonged to my grandparents was the place of Christmas celebrations, birthday parties and simple everyday living.
It was and still is a place where I can get away, if I choose to. A personal place of peace. I understand that the value of that is subjective, but I also know that everyone who has one understands the value of their own special place and quite often that value is priceless.

There is of course the economic impact that the Coalpac Consolidation Project will have.

As it stands at the moment my family has a financial asset in the form of a ½ acre block of land and the family home. It is our intention to keep this asset, however if we were to change our minds and decide to sell, I feel certain that the possibility to sell this asset on the open market would be impossible.
Can you imagine the real estate advertisement?

Beautiful Country Retreat

Close to school, shop and soon to be approximately 800 metres from an open cut mine. The mine will operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with the possibility of various blast times operating during this time. The mine will only be in operation for the next 20 years. The noise and dust levels that result from the mine's activities will be monitored to ensure they don't exceed acceptable standards—but there is no guarantee that the noise and dust won't impact on both your and your families' short term or long term health.

The house is perfect for the DIY types but not in a recommended location for people with asthma, eczema or other allergies, or those interested in getting away from it all to find a place of peace and quiet.
Surprisingly, the market value of a house is not the actual value of the house. The only true financial value of that asset is the amount of money a buyer actually pays for the house. Given the significant impact of the Coalpact Consolidation Project on Cullen Bullen and 4tho surrounding areas, I doubt that any buyer in a free market would be willing to pay 'fair market value'.

In very real terms, it seems to me that if the Coalpact Consolidation Project goes ahead, my family will have lost one of our greatest financial assets.

There are other people here today who can speak with greater authority on the topics of the environment and health in relation to the Coalpact Consolidation Project. However, I would like to take this opportunity to add my own personal concerns.
One of my concerns is the impact of the project on health. I know that the Coalpore Consolidation Project addresses the issues of noise and air pollution - but on a very basic level living with high levels of dust particles, industrial fumes and a constant 24 hour a day, 7 days a week apparently low level noise for 20 years can not be healthy.

My other major concern is the environment.

According to the NSW State Forests website www.forests.nsw.gov.au - NSW State Forests are open for the public to explore. People can experience and appreciate the forest environment and participate in a wide-range of nature based recreation and tourism activities. The site also says that sustainable forest management is about finding a balance between all the different ways people use forests, while maintaining the unique forest features, the community values - like biodiversity, clean air, water, habitat and cultural heritage.
As much of the Coalpact Consolidation Project encompasses the Ben Bullen State Forest, I don't see how these ideas fit together. How is it that a State owned forest - a place that has been deliberately set aside for public use, can now be used by an individual company for the sole purpose of making a profit?

It seems to me that there had been a line drawn in the sand - but now that line is gone and I'm concerned that it will take an enormous amount of effort to re-establish the boundaries that once existed. Once those lines become blurred, I feel that as a nation and not just as the small community of Cullen Bullen, there will be a heavy price to pay - perhaps not by us but by future generations.

We have both the privilege and the responsibility to not only make a stand for what we believe in, but to follow through and make the right decisions and take action so that future generations may have the same, if not better opportunities than us.
I'm sure most of you have heard this saying before - it is said to be a Native American Proverb. I believe it sums up the essence of what is being proposed in the Coalpact Consolidation Project.

"Only when the last tree has died, the last river has been poisoned, the last fish has been caught will we realize that we can't eat money."

In my case, it's about not knowing or appreciating the value of the environment I grew up in. Most of the value that I now place on my family home and our surrounding land in Cullen Bunn comes from intangible and subjective sources. But that makes it no less real. Now that it is under threat, I have a 6 year old son of my own who may never have the same opportunities to enjoy our personal place of peace. I am grateful for the right to voice my opinion, as well as the opportunity to protect what is precious to me and my family. Thank you.