Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Coalpac Consolidation Project
Application Number 10 0178

I am writing to register my objection to the above proposal for the following reasons:

- The irreversible destruction of unique and rare biodiversity habitats within the Ben Bullen State Forest that will result from the proposed open cut mining activity

Offset and onsite rehabilitation promised by Coalpac in their application, can never restore this habitat to anywhere near its original condition after the surface clearing and subsurface tunnelling necessary to mine the area. We, the public, who own this land, will have to be content with a landscape architects vision for “rehabilitation”.

The rock “pagoda” formations and the associated flora and fauna found within the boundary of the State Forest, have been internationally recognized for their outstanding biodiversity and the limited distribution of this ecosystem type in Australia. Mining within the forest will further fractionate the continuity of this unique sandstone country, continuity which is necessary to maintain species diversity and longterm survival of this environment.

There are over 400 native plant species identified within the boundary of the Coalpac Consolidation Project site, indicating the high degree of biodiversity present. Coalpac has understated this number in their EIS. And to illustrate the interconnected nature of species within ecohabitats, this omission includes a species of native blackthorn, the host plant of the endangered Bathurst Copper Butterfly. In fact, the habitat of 15 mammal species and 15 bird species, listed as threatened under the Federal Govt’s EPBC Act, would be destroyed and 2 threatened species of Eucalyptus would disappear.
Probable negative impact on water quality and the water table

The open cut mining proposal doesn’t satisfy me that the local water table and streams won’t be put at risk from mining activity waste. There has been contamination of local creeks by heavy metals and acid mine drainage from existing mining and this proposal doesn’t include sufficient mitigation processes. In fact, it’s difficult to imagine how they could sufficiently mitigate against water contamination given the nature of mining activity and natural hydrology. Consequently, any contamination will become widespread as it’s dispersed into the natural water systems and eventually end up in groundwater. Again, we, the public owners of this land, are being asked to accept an unacceptable compromise.

Increase in CO2 emissions

This project alone would increase Australia’s total carbon footprint by 1.3%! In my opinion, Coalpac hasn’t sufficiently justified the need for yet another coalmine in the area, other than to increase the company’s profit margin! The majority of the coal from this project will be supplied to the Mt Piper power station, which already has approximately 10 collieries in the area for supply, two of which are open cut operations owned by Coalpac.

It is unacceptable in the present age to consider expansion of coal mining, whether above or underground, when there is a substantial coal mining industry already operating and sustainable alternative energy sources exist that are not being investigated or developed.

Poor record of compliance by Coalpac within their operation approval

It is of great concern to me that Coalpac has recently (2008) been fined for producing more coal at their open cut Invincible colliery north of Lithgow, than is allowed by their government operating approval and fined on 11 other occasions for pollution infringements. The fines are of such insignificant value to such a large operation that they are no deterrent at all and it is more profitable to break the conditions of their approval for as long as they can get away with it, than to remain within the law! Why would I trust this company with another mining lease in such a valuable, pristine, natural environment?
Negative impact on the residents of the town of Cullen Bullen

The small, rural town of Cullen Bullen is situated adjacent to the proposed site of the Coalpac Consolidation Project and the mining site will extend to within 1km of the town. The residents are understandably concerned about the adverse risks to their air and water quality and possible land subsidence from mining activity. They are well aware of the negative health impacts that exist in other communities in similar circumstances and the damage done to property in close proximity to open cut or underground mining activity.

In addition, this mine will operate 24hrs a day, 7 days a week.

Both the proximity to the town and the hours of operation are totally unacceptable. I doubt any resident of Australia would willingly agree to conditions such as these, that would lower the quality and amenity of their lifestyle forever!

I cannot see any redeeming features of the Coalpac Consolidation Project, except to Coalpac itself for short term financial gain, and call upon the NSW government to reject it and protect the sensitive environment contained within the Ben Bullen State Forest by declaring it a State Conservation Area. Otherwise, it would seem that this government is all about appeasing the wealthy mining sector for political advantage, instead of protecting the interests of the larger but less influential voting public.

Declaration by the undersigned:

I have not made any donations of $1000 or more to any political party over the past two years.

Yours sincerely

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