Review and Public Hearing Wallarah 2 Coal Project (SSD 4974)
2 April 2014, Central Coast Greens submission

Acknowledgement

I wish to acknowledge the Darkinjung people on whose land we are meeting today, their elders past, present and future; and the stewardship they hold over this land.

Refutations

I would like to challenge two of the speakers who have preceded me today in supporting this application.

First, Mr Price of AIG, who spoke of some of his members who are food producers. As reported in Monday's IPCC report, food security in Australasia will decline until the end of this century, leading to a loss of raw materials for Mr Price's members and perhaps he should consider this in deciding whether to support the proposal.

From the safety point of view, it is great that Australia is a world leader in methane extraction from mine, the trouble is, where does this potent greenhouse gas then go? Especially considering that it has ten times the potency of CO₂ in the atmosphere for a seventy year lifespan before it dissipates.

Secondly, Mr Gaggin of the Central Coast Poultry Club, has claimed that there have been no deaths in the last ten years in NSW from coal dust. This is refuted by Morgan (2003) who, in a base level comparison of > 30 year mortalities between the Hunter, Illawarra and Sydney showed that the difference between the similar size and wind condition communities of the Hunter and the Illawarra was greater than 250% greater in the Hunter, an area of significant coal dust production from it's continued association with coal mining.

EIS inadequacies

An independent review of this application, requested by Wyong Shire Council (WSC) (Earth Systems, 2013), found serious concerns about leakages through substratum layers as it is underlain by permeable sediment, not impermeable conglomerate as assumed by the applicant from their Mandalong mining operation. The current applicant hasn't done any new or original testing work. The conclusions drawn by the applicant's EIS are based on little real data and are just modelling and projections based on the applicant's own best case scenario. As a result of this independent report, WSC officers believed that the safety and security of the Central Coast's water supply would be compromised.

As for the use of the novel term 'aquiclude' in the EIS, it is a term not found in any search of peer reviewed hydrodynamic or geological literature.

Professor Pells has stated that the mining company admits that water loss in the valley may be 0.74ML/d to begin with, but will eventually escalate to 2.5million L/d between the next 20 and 40 years. This is greater that the average annual rainfall required to replenish it.

Modelling used doesn't account for the rock fractures which will result in the Patonga Claystone. Predicted impacts on surface water flows are inconsistent with actual impacts of longwall mining elsewhere in the Sydney basin. Most spectacularly in the Southern Coalfields, where cracking of the bed of the Cataract River led to decreased surface water flow, gas release, fish kills, Iron bacteria mats, deterioration of water quality and instream habitat. (DEH, 2011) Periodic drying up of this river has continued, with cessation of flows recorded on over 20 occasions between June 1999 and
October 2002 (11-13 years after mining commenced in the vicinity) (DIPNR, 2003 in op.cit) At one site, … localised water loss up to 4ML/d has been recorded (ibid.)

If, as the applicant has admitted, horizontal subsidence occurs within 154m of the banks of the Wyong River, it will affect Porter's Creek weir, Mardi weir and associated pump stations and water storage facilities. This will include the state and federal funded $125 million pipeline completed in 2013 to protect the Central Coast's water supply to over 300 000 people during future droughts, which we now know, following Monday's IPCC report, will be more frequent and of greater intensity than previously experienced.

There is no water management plan, yet the mine will be pumping out 1.5-2ML/d. Is this highly acidic, metalliferous effluent going straight into the resultant, reduced water catchment of the the 300 000 Central Coast residents too?

Wyong water catchment was protected under a proclaimed NSW Statute in 1950 (NSW Government, 1950). There is an Aquifer Interference Policy. Both of these should be invoked and this mine proposal judged against them. Is it within the power of this PAC to overrule this proclamation and policy?

**Sea level rises**

Latest IPCC report released just 2 days ago, reported that there will be an 28-98cm rise in sea level by 2100. (McInnes, 2014)

Wyong, Gosford and Lake Macquarie LGA's are the 3 most vulnerable in terms of residential homes affected adversely in NSW. (CoA, 2009; in Gosford City Council, 2010)

The removal of 5 million Tonnes p.a. of thermal coal will lead to the emission of 271 700 000 T CO₂-e over the 38 year projected life span of this project. (Energy Matters, 2012) This is unsustainable in light of the warning that we must, as a species, leave 80% of all fossil fuel resources in the ground if we are to avoid global climate change of less than 2°C and the catastrophic results which will result from this scenario.

The Great Barrier Reef is already reduced to 60% of it's former area and burning more coal, wherever this occurs will only ensure the Reef's complete destruction and the loss of a $7 billion p.a. industry which depends upon it's continued survival.

**Jobs**

The only jobs created by this application will be for miners which have been displaced from the Hunter Valley and other areas with stranded fossil fuel assets. It will not create local jobs, contrary to what the applicant's glossy brochures would like you to believe.

This morning's ABC RN news reports tell of BHP opening a new mine in Townsville, with only applications from FIFO workers being accepted. (0900 News) This is the way of the future and will mean that none of these highly skilled workers will be drawn from the local area.

**Health**

In last Friday's local paper, the Express Advocate Wyong, we read of a fire burning on an old mine site belonging to the applicant. This mine had been carelessly abandoned without any rehabilitation following previous workings. Is this failure to protect local air quality indicative of the applicant's inability to guarantee air quality into the future? Should this proposal go ahead, it will cause heath risks from future fires in the mine and the Toohey's Road coal dump.
Even the applicant admits, in the EIS, that there will be deaths from the increase in fine airborne particles of coal dust. (Wallarah 2 Coal Project, 2007) This is UNACCEPTABLE to our community. Are you the people who are going to console the families of those who will die as a result of any approval granted here today? If so, you had better leave your home addresses with us, so that we can publish them in the local paper for the bereaved families to contact you, because know this, if you approve this application today, people in this area, perhaps some of those sitting in this room in front of you right now, WILL DIE as a result of your decision. Do you want that on your conscience? How will you sleep at night, knowing that you are the people who sent them to their premature deaths? Will you look them in the eye and say that you rubber stamped this application that killed their loved ones?

Conclusion

You must not approve this application on the grounds of Wyong catchment's previously gazetted protection; the Aquifer Interference policy; the unfulfilled promises of the applicant; the tardiness and unreliability of the modelling and predictions of the applicant's EIS; the effects of the CO₂-e produced as a result of mining and burning this coal on global climate change and local vulnerability to same; the climate change effects on the GBR; and increased morbidity in the Central Coast and Hunter airsheds over the 38 year life of this proposal. Turn down this application today, you have solid grounds to do so and currently extant legislation will back you up.

References:

Health warning for residents as coal continues to burn 2014, News Local Central Coast Gosford Express Advocate, 28 March edn, Nationwide News Pty Limited, Chullora, NSW.


Gosford City Council 2010, 4 May-last update, Gosford City Council Business Case for Managing Climate Change [Homepage of Gosford City Council], [Online]. Available: lgnsw.org.au/.../GCC_Climate_Change_Adaptation_Business_Case.pdd [2014, 1 April].


References (cont.):