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7<sup>th</sup> December, 2015  
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Planning Assessment Commission Hearing  
Russell Vale Colliery Underground Expansion, Wollongong LGA  
Tuesday, 8<sup>th</sup> December, 2015

**Should the Russell Vale mine expansion be approved ?**

1. The first thing that comes to mind is why have successive NSW State governments allowed coal mining in the water catchment areas that supply the 4.5 million people who reside in Sydney with their drinking water. In February, 2013 another PAC heard arguments, including mine, in regard to an application by a company to renew and extend Coal Seam Gas (CSG) exploration wells in the same water catchment area, near where I live at Otford.
2. The short answer is State government/s desire money to flow into treasury and to create jobs and politicians are prepared to be individually and collectively *wilfully blind* to environmental dangers because of that overriding desire. Any job created by putting our water catchment at risk is a wasted job.
3. It has been alleged in the media that Australia is the only country in the world that allows mining in its water catchment areas. I don't know if that is true or not but it wouldn't surprise me, as in Australia, State governments (1) receive the money generated from mining operations and (2) they are in control of the approval process. So (1) plus (2) equals, "Conflict of Interest." Therefore there is surely a need to have "The Right To A Healthy Environment," included in the Constitution of Australia so that the Federal government can be forced to have some oversight, - but that is another fight for another day.

**How important is our drinking water?**

4. Anthony Roberts the Minister for Resources and Energy, appeared on the ABC 7.30 programme on Friday, 17.10.2014 and during an interview said,

**"Water is critical to us. Water cannot be replaced."** [end quote]

5. Premier Baird appeared on ABC 24 on Tuesday, 10.06.2014 and announced that he intended to take privatising 49% of the States' electricity poles to an upcoming election for the purpose of obtaining a potential sale price of \$20 billion. His reason for doing so being,

**"water security for Regional NSW in times of drought plus a new rail tunnel under the [Sydney] harbour."**

6. I'm sure the voters on the north side of the harbour would be pleased with Premier Baird's proposed new rail tunnel; however they and the rest of New South Wales would be more interested in water security for Regional NSW., which raises the question, what about **water security** for Sydney's drinking water supply which originates in the Illawarra's water catchment areas.

7. If we trash our water catchment areas, then selling every asset the government owns will not fix the problem of water contamination or water loss, because we all know that such things cannot be fixed once the damage is done. No amount of money will make any difference. It is rightly said that, "Pure water is the foundation of a healthy city."

8. Basically it is all about **risk**, - that risk being the product of the *likelihood* and *consequence* of an **outcome**.

9. The proposed mine will cause subsidence, cracking and water loss in the Cataract River, Cataract and Bellambi Creeks, as well as water-storing swamps which are vital refuges to wildlife, especially in times of drought. It is alleged that Wollongong Coal is proposing to use potentially risky new mining methods to extract a third seam of coal beneath two previously mined seams placing our catchment at risk. Large quantities of surface water would be lost and coal would be stockpiled near people's homes and a pre-school.

10. I believe that the proposed expansion will impose too much stress on this environment which will lead to irreversible or unacceptable impacts, which when they appear will not be capable of repair; that is why the government implemented laws that allow mining companies and developers to offer to repatriate elsewhere 'like for like' and if that cannot be done, the present government is now proposing that miners and developers pay financial compensation into a fund; so that the miners or developers can then go ahead and cause the expected damage anyway; a nice shonky 'loophole' to stop nature getting in the way of economic progress.

11. But the politicians don't own the water or the land and all that it nurtures; they just manage it in trust, for we the people. I don't trust this era of politicians in regard to their decisions about mining and development; they have the 'conflict of interest' I mentioned at the start of this talk and **that's the way they like it**. They are blind to the simple principle that any economic activity must create more benefits than harm to people and the natural systems.

12. This proposed expanded mining proposal is to be undertaken in our unique and precious drinking water catchment area, and it should be noted that whilst the financial rewards may be quantifiable, the risks are not. When you take a risk, you have to be prepared for the consequences, as well as the rewards. In 10, 20 years time the money generated from this project will be long gone, but the likely damage caused to the land and water will be permanent.

13. The focus must be on stopping the potential devastating and permanent adverse environmental consequences that this project, if approved, will cause. The protection of this pristine area is far more important to NSW and Australia than any short term jobs and the money that its approval may bring into treasury.

14. I submit that this proposal should be rejected.

Why?

Because, **“Water is critical to us. Water cannot be replaced, ....”**

*....especially in the Illawarra, under the Southern Cross.*

Adrian M. Ingleby  
7<sup>th</sup> December, 2015