

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [PAC Enquiries Mailbox](#)  
**Subject:** Submission: Russell Vale Colliery Underground Expansion Project  
**Date:** Monday, 7 December 2015 4:12:05 PM

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Dear PAC Commissioners, and Minister Robert Stokes,

**I write to OBJECT to the proposed expansion of the coal mine at Russell Vale by Wollongong Coal Ltd.**

I object because:

1. The mine currently and with any expansion is environmental vandalism;
2. There are large expected losses of fresh water from the Sydney water catchment, and significant risks of much greater losses of water quality and quantity in the Sydney water supply;
3. The mine already negatively affects local residents and also more widely Wollongong residents (or anyone who uses the same roads and gets covered in coal dust) – through coal dust pollution, noise pollution and traffic impacts;
4. The mine, its operations and its products lead to large emissions of greenhouse gases, including:
  - a. fugitive emissions from the mine, pit-top and slag heap
  - b. GHG emissions associated with coal extraction
  - c. GHG emissions associated with coal transport to India (or elsewhere)
  - d. GHG emissions associated with use of coking coal in steel manufacture which is very highly energy and GHG intensive
  - e. GHG emissions associated with use of the extracted thermal coal.

I also object on two other fronts. These are:

1. Mining of this area does not show respect of Australian Indigenous people's honouring of country. I am informed that the local Indigenous people (the Dharawal nation) have never given their permission for mining at Russell Vale. This mining, without their consent and approval, is a continuation of colonial exploitation, which, as a 4<sup>th</sup> generation Australian, I would like to see Australia overcome and move away from.
2. In all of the documentation related to this mine I have yet to come across an argument for the **NEED** for this mine. The proponents have NEVER made a case that this mine is NEEDED. We all know that there would be a lot more jobs (and much less environmental destruction) in people going around and gathering up old steel and recycling it and even transporting it to India if that is where they need steel most, than there is in coal mining. Any argument saying that we are doing it for the jobs in the Illawarra is garbage. We also know that there would be a lot more jobs in developing or supporting renewable energy businesses. According to the CIE report (*Review of CBA for Russell Vale extension*, Oct 2015 ) the supposed benefit of this mine is \$23 million. However this report contains numerous provisos, e.g.:
  - a. *There are a number of areas where impacts are expected to be immaterial or can be readily mitigated. To the extent that this holds, then it would reduce the financial profitability of the Project. The Department should, however, satisfy itself that such mitigation actions are undertaken to ensure that there are no third party impacts that would need to be incorporated into the economic*

*assessment. [p12]*

- b. Repeatedly the report assumes that Wollongong Coal Ltd incorporates into its capital and operating costs, costs associated with attending to approval conditions and also with mitigation if required. And that the \$23million is separate from this. However the community knows that Wollongong Coal Ltd picks and chooses which conditions it is going to adhere to. Also even the Wollongong Coal Ltd's own consultants (*Russell Vale Colliery Underground Expansion Project Response to Public Hearing*. Hansen Bailey Feb 2015) acknowledges quite openly that there have been no successful cases of remediation of upland swamps after undermining. And like others in northern Wollongong I am noticing the recent escarpment cliff-face falls and wondering whether they are, at least in part, a response to underground mining. So of course there are going to be very big impacts, which affect the broader community, and which will remain unmitigated into the future. These are not accounted for in any economic analysis. At a much much smaller scale, no-one is going to compensate me for the way the coal-dust absorbs to the paint on my car and damages it. No-one compensates me for my time and costs associated with the frequent cleaning of my car caused by the coal particulates, that I now have to do. No-one is going to compensate me or others for health impacts from breathing in this polluted air. No-one is going to compensate me for the loss of a child if they die from a coal-dust related disease. Just like the upland swamps, my children are unique and I object to the idea that, if damaged or dead, they can be *offset* elsewhere!

I call on you all to listen to your own hearts.

Your ancestors, if they lived in Australia, would know this proposal was WRONG – water is not to be taken for granted in this country. And they would also have known that you do not do anything that risks damage to fresh water supplies. Your children or grandchildren also would know this proposal is WRONG. IF you have children or grandchildren, take them to the mine, go inside it, see if you can watch the collapse of geological strata after the extraction of the coal. Go up top, you should be able to get a pass into the affected designated special areas, and visit the swamps up top and see for yourselves the loss of swamps and huge cracks allowing water to drain away. Will you proudly tell your grand/children that you allowed this mine to proceed? Or would you be prouder to tell your grand/children that you argued against it? Also, would you allow your grand/children to live or go to school so close to such a mine with the exposure to coal dust and the risk of fire at the slag heap?

You might tell me that RIGHT and WRONG are not relevant to your decisions – to the decisions of the NSW Department of Planning and Environment and the PAC. You might tell me that LEGAL and ILLEGAL only, are relevant to your decisions. In their response to expressed community concerns Wollongong Coal Ltd's consultants did exactly that. When the community said various things, eg that upland swamps would be destroyed and that offsets do not work, Wollongong Coal Ltd merely stated that it would do what was legal (which includes damage and then offset fund contribution). People in Wollongong and NSW residents deserve more than that. We do not want to be left with sick people, unemployed miners, diminished degraded environments and ecosystems when the coal companies skip town.

I have a BScApp(Biotechnology) and PhD (Chemical Engineering) and I know that this education,

while it allows me to read and understand various reports more than I would otherwise have done, does not necessarily lead me to knowing the truth about a situation such as this. Whether this should proceed or not is not so much about SCIENCE as about VALUES. For me my values are pretty selfish. I don't want to destroy the environment, the earth, that supports me and those I hold most dear. So please REJECT this proposal outright, and be part of creating a better future.

Yours sincerely

Deidre Stuart 

I declare that I have made no political donations.