

PAC Meeting 8th December

I am a resident of Woonona, a suburb close to Russell Vale. I oppose this project.

My main concern is the risk of further damage to our water catchment systems, as a result of mining. According to the AR, it is inevitable that there will be some impacts.

and there are many variations in the predictions given.

for example.
Firstly, I note that there are significant differences in predictions in baseflow and stream flow losses, which was queried by the DPI and WaterNSW. The higher figure predicts a loss of 7.3 ML per day. This equals the daily average consumption of 24,580 people, based on WaterNSW figure of 297 litres per person per day. Whilst the Department considers this the worst case scenario, these figures, supplied by Wollongong Coal's own consultant, cannot be ignored.

Also, the Department acknowledges concerns made by the Office of Environment and Heritage, regarding the uncertainty in predicting impacts on the upland swamps. In fact, the Department goes on to say that some impacts on swamps are an unavoidable consequence of longwall mining, should be weighed up against the social and economic benefits of the project and offset if they are greater than negligible. Offsets are not the answer. Any adverse effects on the swamps impact on the efficiency of this extraordinary water system – part of the drinking water system that provides water to over 4 and a half million people. Offsets will not fix up any damage.

It is therefore pleasing that the terms of reference for the Commission include consideration of the amendment to the SEPP on 2nd September. By repealing clause 12AA, the significance of the resource is no longer to be the consent authority's principal consideration, providing a more balanced framework for decision makers to assess likely impacts of mining developments.

The environment in fact should come to the forefront in such evaluations as we are moving into challenging times, with the predicted climate change issues that are looming. After all, water is our most precious resource, needed to maintain life itself. We have a responsibility to do all we can to ensure

protection of our drinking water catchments for future generations. In this context, it's relevant to recall the adage, 'think global, act local'.

Living locally, I am concerned that increased production will inevitably cause an increase in local air and noise pollution. I cannot see how this can be avoided and, with the mine being so close to a residential area, is unacceptable.

Furthermore, I have no confidence in Wollongong Coal. The company appears to be financially unsound. Also, with a history of non-compliance, I have no faith in the company adhering to so-called commitments that are included in this assessment.

As a member of the local community, I do care about our miners. Of course I want high employment in satisfying jobs for our workforce. But the future does not lie in coal-mining. Whilst Wollongong is still sometimes referred to as a mining community, the facts are, according to the last census, that mining in the Illawarra only employs 2.6% of our workforce. New technologies are being developed, where the need for coking coal for steel manufacture can be phased out and it is inevitable that this will happen. - And all Wollongong Coal production is exported to India, not used by our local steel works.

Government and our local business groups need to roll out comprehensive plans for realistic jobs, including in renewable energy, that will provide secure, satisfying careers for our workers and generations to come. We need guaranteed jobs that are not harmful to our precious environment. - Otherwise, we have a bleak future ahead.

I call on the commissioners to reject this proposal.