

Peter Hodges



Aaron Brown  
The Secretary  
The Department of Planning and Environment  
GPO Box 39  
Sydney NSW 2001  
16/11/2016

Dear Sir (and Commissioners)

First up I am not an anti mining person. I started working in underground mines in 1969 in the Cessnock area. I finally left the industry in 1988, (still underground mines). In those days it was referred to as "winning coal". It was dangerous and difficult work. I lost several workmates to various accidents etc but there was always a very strong community support. The most unnerving experience was when a pit siren went off, that usually indicated a serious accident at that particular mine and emergency rescue was kicked into action. There are around 1800 names on the remembrance memorial in Aberdare. There were up to approximately 32 to 36 underground mines in the Greater area of Cessnock in its hay day. A lot of the villages were near an underground mine. I used to ride my pushbike down the street where we lived, crossed the railway line to go am work in the Aberdare East mine. Quite often the mine name was the village name. Elrington, Kearsley, Pelaw Main, Richmond Main, Bellbird, Neath, Aberdare, Aberdare East, Kitchener, Rothbury to name a few.

So why am I so against the continuing expansion of the open cut method of mining?

Unlike the areas subject to underground mining in the past, where people were and are still living, the open cut method destroys everything. The bulldozers wipe everything out. The habitat for all the various wildlife species is terminated. For the water, the destruction of the geological strata is no different. I have been on the land for most of my life. I have replaced, upgraded or sunk new wells and bores. The licensing conditions stipulate the well or more likely the bore has to be set up with its intake holes targeting the water mentioned on the license application. To ignore these conditions and just having intake holes higgledy and piggedly could lead to cross contamination of different layers of water separated by impermeable geological rock and clay strata. For example in the Cessnock area some of the pits were notorious for the problem with acid water, water that actually ate the galvanised pipes underground and even chewed away at the continuous mining machines. With an open cut mine heading down up to 200 metres and smashing all the different stratas, the different layers of water would be reduced to the lowest common denominator. Unuseable toxic rubbish! What makes it even worse is when the smashed overburden is backfilled into the void as the mine marches on. As history has proven, these old voids will fill up with water, more than likely a toxic brew which will then continue its journey into the Hunter River via surface and underground means. Think I'm joking, BHP Billion's massive failure in Brazil (a dam failure) led to the mess going all the way to the coast. They currently have one of the biggest mines operating in the Hunter Valley, a stone's throw away from water bearing alluvial flats connected to the Hunter River.

Another problem is the crooks. The ICAC has exposed the workings of several politicians and yet these crooks are still allowed to walk the streets. They seem to have had tremendous legal and

political support allowing them to stay out of jail at this stage. I suspect some powers to be are concerned if these clowns go behind bars they will squawk like parrots and drop some more names! I see one of the presenters here today supporting Drayton South is Bankrupt boganaire Nathan Tinker. (as described in the Telegraph). His was CEO of Australian Pacific Coal negotiating with Anglo American to purchase the Dartbrook Mine until he was revealed in the media. Just proves Anglo American coal must be desperate to get this approval so they can flog the Drayton mine off and get out of the rehabilitation liabilities.

The new conditions attached to this approval I suspect not worth the paper they are written on. Once approved the owners can come back and apply to change those condition. ie: Bengalla in 2006 came back and increased the height of their overburden hill by 30metres to 270 RL. Note attached.

Previous PAC submission is also attached.

Yours Sincerely Concerned

Peter



## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Bengalla Mine (Bengalla) is located approximately 4 km west of Muswellbrook in the Upper Hunter Valley of NSW. Bengalla Mining Company (BMC) was granted development consent (DA 211/93) in 1996, in accordance with the supporting document *Bengalla Coal Mine Environmental Impact Statement 1993* (Bengalla EIS). This approval allowed Bengalla to produce up to 8.7 Million tonnes per annum (Mtpa) of Run-of-Mine (ROM) coal for 21 years, and conduct other associated mining activities.

BMC was granted a consent modification to DA 211/93 (DA 211/93 (M1)) under Section 96(2) of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act) in November 2006 in accordance with the supporting document *Statement of Environmental Effects – Modifications to Mining Operations 2006* (Bengalla SEE). This approval permits BMC to:

- Increase the final landform height by up to 30 metres to 270 RL;
- Relocate the overland conveyor and ROM Coal Hopper;
- Upgrade the Coal Handling & Preparation Plant (CHPP) to allow two-stage washing;
- Construct temporary tailings drying areas; and
- Increase maximum allowable ROM coal production levels to 10.7 Mtpa.

In December 2007, BMC was granted a further modification to DA 211/93 (DA 211/93 (M2)) in accordance with the supporting *Bengalla Mining Company Wantana Extension Statement of Environmental Effects 2007* (Wantana SEE). The Wantana SEE allows for the following:

- Extension of mining operations into the 32 hectare Wantana Extension, entirely within the existing Mining Leases and Development Application Boundary;
- Minor infrastructure modifications and revised maintenance manning strategy; and
- Consolidation of in-pit facilities.

A modification to DA 211/93 (DA 211/93 (M3)) was granted under Section 75W of the EP&A Act in July 2008. This approval is supported by the *Bengalla Mining Company Development Consent Modification Environmental Assessment 2008* (Bengalla Link Road EA) (Bengalla EA, 2008) and allows the construction of the Bengalla Link Road Stage 2 on the preferred alignment and for a delay in a component approved in DA 211/93 (M1).

A fourth modification to DA 211/93 (DA 211/93 (M4)) under Section 75W of the EP&A Act was approved in October 2011. This approval is supported by the *Bengalla Mining Company Development Consent Modification Environmental Assessment 2010* (Bengalla Modification EA) (Bengalla EA, 2010).



DA211/93 (M4) allows:

- Acceleration of mining operations within the Wantana Extension Area to align it with existing mining operations;
- Extending the footprint and associated landform of the existing Overburden Emplacement Area (OEA) to the south-east;
- Relocation of the already approved temporary OEA to the west of the current operations; and
- Delaying the finalisation and rehabilitation of the northern face of the existing Overburden Emplacement Area.


### **1.2 Objectives**

This Rehabilitation Management Plan (RMP) has been prepared to manage project specific and rehabilitation objectives associated with BMC's mining operations. The objectives of this RMP are to:

- Ensure that all relevant statutory requirements (specifically Schedule 3, Condition 41 of DA 211/93 (as modified)) and BMC policies and standards relating to rehabilitation are met;
- Ensure that rehabilitation activities are applied consistently with the Mining Operations Plan (MOP) (BMC, 2012)
- Develop an undulating, free-draining landform with an optimum land capability which supports agricultural land for predominately cattle grazing and native habitat;
- The final landform will be undulating, with slopes generally to 10°, and up to a maximum of 18° on the low wall with effective erosion and sediment control measures; and
- Describe the objectives for the final landform.

This RMP is implemented within active mining areas of the Bengalla DA Boundary (see **Figure 1**) and is applicable to the management of all rehabilitation activities at the site.

Peter Hodges



The Secretary  
The Department of Planning and Environment  
GPO Box 39  
Sydney NSW 2001

9/9/2015

Dear Ms McNally

Re; Objection to Drayton South Project Application No: SSD6875.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above proposal. I have commented previously on this proposal and not all that much has changed. The proposed mine expansion is still too close to the Darley and Coolmore operations.

I am not an anti mining person. I have actually worked in 3 underground mines and a mine operated small power station. I appreciate the benefits of mining all sorts of products which help us in many ways. But I am against stupidity.

Putting aside the negative impacts on a lot of other activities such as agriculture, wine industry, tourism and yes, the thoroughbred industry, let's have a look at the environmental cost. A recent report I studied, said the mining output from the mines in the Hunter Valley and associated areas was 143 million tonnes for the 2013 year. What it also indicated was the accepted ratio of per tonne of coal produced was 6.5 cubic metres of overburden removed. Roughly 6.5 tonnes of overburden per tonne of coal produced. That equates to close to 1 billion tonnes of existing geology, smashed. Just in one year. When starting up a new open cut mining operation, a new mountain of overburden is started, from then on the overburden is thrown into the previous hole created, and as the mine finishes up at the end of the mining run, a hole is left that will more than likely eventually fill up with water. The question then has to be asked, what will happen with the water that is contaminated from the now released by-product of the mining process. This by-product would have been previously locked away in different impermeable layers of rock and clays etc but now, because that has all been blown up and smashed, it is released. These can be different types of minerals, waters and acids previously contained in geology that evolved over millions of years. My real fear is this contamination will eventually find its way into the Hunter River and head down to the coastal estuarine habitat areas which are absolutely vital for the continuation of many aquatic species such as young fish prawns worms oysters crabs etc.

Can't happen? Well I've been on the land, one way or another for most of my life. I grew up in Cessnock and remember vividly the 65/66 drought. The creeks around Cessnock dried up and the fish and yabbies were not happy. We were shown the impact of the drought on the farmers via black and white television. Dead sheep, cattle and crop losses. We landed in the Scone region early in the 1970's. There were dairy farms and crop production all the way from Muswellbrook to Wingen in a continuous line. Most of the creeks seemed to run all year round and occasionally flooded. Then in 1979 it seemed to all change with the start of the 1979/1983 drought, followed by 1987, 1991, 1995 droughts and then the drought that ran from 2001 to June 2007. That one was broken by the Pasha Bulka, head butting Newcastle beach. The thing that struck me about the 1970's was one could bog a tractor on a gravel ridge because there was so much moisture about. When a period like this hits

us sometime in the future it is not too hard to work out what the impacts of so much mining in a relatively concentrated area is eventually going to have on our stream and river system. Even with climate change this will still happen because again, as the planet heats up, the extremes will be bigger and have a greater impact. More droughts, more floods and more fires.

The big difference between open cut mining and agriculture based industries is this.

With open cut mining, the landscape is smashed. Yes they do rehabilitation work, but it is yet to be proven to stand the test of time. A scientist friend of mine, Mr Ken Reynolds, who passed away several years ago and who worked for the Soil Conservation Service told me he had been instructed to find a way to rehabilitate overburden. Experiments found the trees planted would last between 15 to 20 odd years but once their roots hit the deeper overburden material they would start to get sick and eventually die. So in other words, rehabilitation would look good from a distance but not stand the test of time. Eventually the land would become useless for agriculture and no good for mining because that's already been done.

The future is in agriculture, whether it be in food production, such as cattle, sheep, goats, olives, vegetables, wine, hops, crops, citrus, stone fruits etc. And let's not forget our equine industry. Especially the thoroughbred industry. Combined with all the other equine breeds and uses, the horse industry the last time I looked, was the 3<sup>rd</sup> biggest employer in the country. Overall in the agricultural sector, employment is going up. Opportunities are there and rewarding. I love the stuff!

Employment in the mining industry is heading south and the sackings are continuing, even though overproduction is going up. The idiots in government need to stop throwing snags at the renewable industry because if this industry was allowed to develop it would help make up opportunities for those who lose their jobs in future automated open cut mining. The other thing the government needs to get rid of, are the crooks. But that seems to be a very slow process indeed. The fact that some of them have been politicians might be the problem.

Yours Sincerely

Peter