

I wish to make my submission on the Bylong Coal Project.

- The Bylong coal project is unacceptable and must not be granted consent.
- It will cause the loss of in excess of 1000 hectares of agricultural land that will be rendered useless as the result of the planned mining activities. By reviewing the impacts on lands by mining throughout the Hunter Valley it is absolutely evident that all lands should be permanently and securely made off-limits to any kind of mining activity.
- KEPCO, owns and controls nearly half the available water in the Bylong River water source and will redirect this water from irrigated agriculture to open cut mining. The Water will be lost to the valley as direct mining impacts and will never be recovered. Over 440 hectares of land that currently supports irrigated agriculture will no longer do so if the mine goes ahead. This equates to the equivalent loss of this land for future agriculture.

This is supported by the DPI analysis into the water disturbance by this project.

- The impacts of this project on agricultural land and water adds to the ever increasing losses of our land and water and appears to be the worst ever seen for a coal mine proposal in this state and could have far reaching consequences. There must be a limit to where mining can occur. There needs to be a halt to this type of activity by an overseas company with no respect for the land they will destroy. Open-cutting any agricultural land clearly needs to be halted and this project needs to be the beginning of the process to protect our land against the continual pillage of our resources.
- Extensive water use by and groundwater inflows to the coal mine and its close proximity to the Bylong River will cause extensive and severe draw down of the productive Bylong alluvial aquifer, well beyond the minimal impact criteria of NSW's Aquifer Interference Policy. In some places, for one of the models used, the drawdown of the alluvium exceeds 10 metres.
- KEPCO's assertion that this dramatic exceedance of the Aquifer Interference Policy criteria does not count because the mining company has purchased the properties that will be affected by this damage is not acceptable: the Bylong water source should not be subjected to this depletion for just 23 years of coal mining, leaving the Valley potentially unable to support productive agriculture into the future after the coal mine has been exhausted.
It must be noted that the Department of Planning and Environment always has concerns as to the mine requirements for water and the possible impact of water entering the underground workings and holds no consideration for the health of the aquifers and this attitude is well expressed in almost all mine approvals and is strongly directed by the office of Water.
- The Department of Primary Industries has expressed concern that in dry conditions, there may be insufficient water to run the mine and has warned that some neighbouring bores may become non-viable as a result of the profound. This is not acceptable under any grounds.
- Even KEPCO has agreed that the potential to reduce the availability of groundwater to agriculture during dry years is likely.

- The Department of Primary Industries is also concerned about flow on impacts to agricultural productivity in the Bylong Valley and the broader region as a result of the mine and the extensive areas of agricultural land and water now owned by the coal company.
- Among the properties now owned by KEPCO are a former thoroughbred breeding property that has already been displaced by the coal mine proposal and historic Tarwyn Park, former home of Melbourne Cup winner Rain Lover and the living laboratory where Peter Andrews developed Natural Sequence Farming practice of regenerative agriculture.
- The mine will also remove 180 hectares of habitat for the critically endangered Regent honeyeater. The Recovery Plan for this species specifically states that “Any breeding or foraging areas where the species is likely to occur” including the area where this project occurs, is “critical to the survival” of this species. The Mudgee-Wollar area is specifically mentioned, and the Plan says that, “It is essential that the highest level of protection is provided to these areas and that enhancement and protection measures target these productive sites.”
- In the six years since KEPCO moved into the Bylong region, it has bought up tens of thousands of hectares of strategic farmland, floodplains, thoroughbred properties, historic properties, homes and facilities in the region and caused substantial social and economic dislocation. Remaining private landholders will be left socially & economically stranded and may lose access to water supply.
- Heavy mine vehicle traffic is proposed to travel through the Munghorn Gap Nature Reserve and Wollar village between Bylong and Mudgee. This is a popular tourist drive. Road conditions are very poor and road safety will be threatened by a massive increase of daily mine traffic and heavy vehicles.

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