

I object to the Bylong Coal Project for the following Reasons:

It's Impacts on Agriculture:

- This Project will cause the loss of 319 hectares of strategic agricultural land and nearly 700 hectares of land that is mapped as part of the equine critical industry cluster. These lands should be permanently and securely made off-limits to any kind of mining activity.
- The Department of Primary Industries is also concerned about flow on impacts to agricultural productivity in the Bylong Valley and the broader region
- The 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 and also a former thoroughbred breeding property has already sadly been displaced by the coal mine proposal.
- Open-cutting strategic agricultural land and equine critical industry cluster land clearly crosses a line that must not be crossed.
- There must be a limit to where mining can occur. The impacts of this project on agricultural land and water are the worst ever seen for a coal mine proposal in this state and could have far reaching consequences.

The Water Impacts:

- Over 440 hectares of land that currently supports irrigated agriculture will no longer do so if the mine goes ahead.
- Nearly half the available water in the Bylong River water source is owned and controlled by the coal company, KEPCO, which intends to redirect this water from irrigated agriculture to open cut mining.
- The volume of water proposed by KEPCO to be drawn from the alluvial aquifer could exceed its recharge, leading to depletion of the groundwater source. This analysis was conducted at the insistence of the Department of Primary Industry.
- 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. Even KEPCO has agreed that it is likely that the availability of groundwater will be reduced to agriculture during dry years.
- The project's close proximity to the Bylong River and extensive water use by and groundwater inflows to the coal mine will cause severe draw down of the productive Bylong alluvial aquifer (well beyond the minimal impact criteria of NSW's Aquifer Interference Policy). In some places the drawdown of the alluvium exceeds 10 metres.
- 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.

Loss of Wiradjuri Cultural Heritage:

- The Wiradjuri heritage of the area has already experienced profound loss from three nearby coal mines and the Office of Environment and Heritage is warning of "permanent intergenerational consequences" if the loss of these sites continues.
- The area targeted by the mine harbours significant Wiradjuri cultural heritage, including artwork and an ochre quarry.

Biodiversity Concerns:

- The mine will 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."
- The cumulative effects of the increasing mining in this region: the depletion of water sources; the increased traffic; the destruction of corridors all will have devastating effects on all the natural animal and plant life in the surrounding areas.
- The Munghorn Gap Nature Reserve will be under threat as heavy mine vehicle traffic is proposed to travel through between Bylong and Mudgee.

It's Social Impacts:

- In the six years since KEPCO moved into the Bylong region, it has caused substantial social and economic dislocation. In this period since KEPCO started buying up properties in the Bylong Valley, thoroughbred activity has ceased, the Bylong Upper School has shut, the Bylong Mouse Races have ceased and many people have vacated the Valley, leaving it barely socially and economically viable.
- Remaining private landholders will be left socially & economically stranded and may lose access to water supply.

The Bylong coal project is unacceptable and must not be granted consent.

Phyllis Setchell
Mudgee
2850