



Mr Brian Gilligan  
Chair  
Planning & Assessment Commission  
Bylong Coal Project - R040/17  
pac@pac.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Gilligan

Running Stream Water Users' Association **objects strongly** to the proposed coal mine in the Bylong Valley. It is appalling that at this point in time, with falling demand for coal, a greenfield coal mine could even be considered, let alone approved, in a high value agricultural valley which has no history whatsoever of mining.

Of key concern is the destruction of water resources used by agriculture - a longterm industry that has been in the valley for over one hundred years and can continue for many hundreds more years - for a shorterterm, 23 year coal project. It just does not make sense. There is not enough water for this mine and we make the following points to support our argument:

- Analysis of the water resource has demonstrated that 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.
- 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 drawdown of the groundwater.
- 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 Inference 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.
- The coal company, KEPCO, owns and controls nearly half the available water in the Bylong River water source and intends to redirect this water from irrigated agriculture to open cut mining. Over 440 hectares of land that currently supports irrigated agriculture will no longer do so if the mine goes ahead. 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.



And water is not the only area of losses. This mine proposal has already had a devastating impact on the community of Bylong to the point where the community has just about disappeared. Kepco has bought out most of the community and in the process has destroyed the thoroughbred breeding industry that was poised to expand until KEPCO arrived on the scene. (Bylong Station was about to expand, but instead decided to relocate and sold out to KEPCO.)

If this mine goes ahead it will also cause losses to Wiradjuri cultural heritage. The area targeted by the mine also harbours significant Wiradjuri cultural heritage, including artwork and an ochre quarry. 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.

This proposed mine will also cause losses to habitat (180 hectares) for the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater. Such habitat is critical to the survival of this species and the Recovery Plan for this species specifically mentions the Mudgee-Wollar area.

This mine is a bad idea - we still wonder how it got through the Gateway Process when it failed to meet eleven out of the twelve criteria. It is time a PAC demonstrated that it is not just another rubber stamp and instead rejects this mine. We understand that because the proponent is a foreign government there will be diplomatic discomfort but surely our water resources and high value agricultural land should be preserved for our future generations.

We beg you and your commissioners to show some courage and regard for our future generations and **reject this mine.**

Yours sincerely

Fiona Sim

President, RSWUA

PS. It is appalling that all the work done on Natural Sequence Farming at Tarwyn Park will be lost. NSF is all about raising the level of the groundwater in the landscape. A drawdown of at least one metre in the ground water is unacceptable. The owners of Tarwyn Park fought for years to prevent this mine, but who would want their children to grow up 300m from an open cut coal mine? No wonder they eventually gave up and sold to KEPCO as it became apparent the Government only thinks of royalties and not the longterm health and viability of our good agricultural land. But this mine CAN be prevented if the PAC shows some courage!