

Wollongong Coal Ltd's Russell Vale Revised Underground Expansion Project (Major Project 09-0013)

I object to the project.

Wollongong Coal wants to extend the Russell Vale coal mine under the Illawarra Catchment. This is objectionable on a large number of grounds including environmental, community and financial.

How is it credible and in the interests of the environment and local communities that the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) has recommended this project as "approvable"? DPIE should be *protecting* the rights of NSW residents and citizens over the expansionist plans of a company that are likely to cause irreparable harm on many levels, particularly to water supply and the environment generally.

As a resident of inner west Sydney, I have confined my objections to the following:

1. My overarching objection is that if allowed to proceed as recommended, the project would add CO₂ emissions to NSW's greenhouse gas inventory at a time when NSW Government policy requires a *reduction* in greenhouse gasses of 35% by 2030.
2. More specifically, and very worryingly, this project poses a real threat to drinking water supply. The planned mining is within the Special Areas of the Greater Sydney Water Catchment, areas regarded as so sensitive and strategically important that public (foot) access is forbidden. Yet unbelievably, coal mining is apparently considered to be feasible and allowable.
3. Linked to the above, the proposed mining involves many risks because it would occur beneath two previously mined seams. Even Wollongong Coal themselves admit it may cause subsidence of the surface of almost one metre. It would be grossly negligent for such mining to be approved in the water catchment for Greater Sydney's 5 million residents.
4. The mine expansion would drain both surface and ground water from the Cataract Reservoir catchment. This "dewatering", exacerbated by increasingly long droughts, would severely impact the biodiversity of the area. That is, as the area dries out, it loses the ability to sustain native plants, animals, birds, reptiles and insects in the area. With further drying out come even greater risks of rampant bushfires. During the recent catastrophic bushfires across NSW, there have already been huge losses of complex biodiversity. We simply cannot afford to keep losing more when there is some control over the process here – namely, to NOT allow expanded coal mining in this area.
5. There is ***no justification for any mining within Sydney's water catchment***. The risk is considerable. It is reckless for DPIE and the NSW Government to jeopardise our water supply, especially when due to indisputable worsening global warming, caused in large part by the burning of fossil fuels, the trend is for hotter summers, more heatwaves, harsher droughts and increasingly catastrophic fires.

6. It is my understanding that Wollongong Coal does not pay company tax, and that the Company has lost money every year since 2013 when the current majority owner took control. As the Company has not generated a taxable income, zero company tax has been paid to the Australian Government since 2013. This is very unlikely to change in future. So aside from the very real environmental concerns this expanded project would raise, it is not even offering income to the Government. Therefore the question must be asked: what else is Wollongong Coal offering the Government as an incentive for this project to be expanded?

As surely the NSW Government – and the Independent Planning Commission - MUST know well, the way forward is increased development of renewable sources of energy across the State. No more coal mining (or gas extraction) should be permissible henceforth.

This proposal is not in the public interest, nor would it help to sustain our increasingly fragile environment which we must all live in.

I urge all Commissioners to recommend that the Russell Vale mine be closed and that no further mining proposals be permitted at all in the Greater Sydney Water Catchment.

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