

**RUSSELL VALE UNDERGROUND COAL MINE EXPANSION**

**Dear IPC Commissioners:** This written submission is based on my verbal statement at the IPC Public Hearing on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2020. Due to time constraints, my verbal statement was much shorter than my confirming written submission below which contains more details for your consideration:

My name is Joy Nason from from Mona Vale in Sydney. Thank you for the opportunity to voice my strong protest regarding the Russell Vale project - which has serious implications for everyone, regardless of Postcode.

My decision to express my concerns is not taken lightly. I prefer to defer to the Experts. I should feel confident that, as the name implies, the Independent Planning Commission is made up of Planning Experts who are:

- \*Impartial**
- \*Balanced**
- \*Dispassionate**
- \*Neutral**
- \*Unprejudiced**
- \*Fair**
- \*Even-handed**
- \*Equitable**

However, it has become increasingly apparent that the Commission's decisions are not Independent in the true sense of the word. Indeed opposite terms spring to mind such as:

- \*Prejudiced**
- \*Unfair**
- \*Partial**
- \*Influenced**
- \*Predisposed**
- \*Inclined**
- \*Subjective**

How else can we explain the recent disastrous outcome of the Narrabri/Santos coal seam gas project which was given the IPC's seal of approval? An unprecedented 23,000+plus public submissions were made from nationally recognised scientific, energy and economic experts, from farmers, from indigenous peoples and from our youth. Almost 98% of the submissions, made in all good faith to the IPC, opposed the project.

Clearly the IPC decision in the Narrabri/Santos project went against the Public Interest. More insidiously - it was a blow to Democracy. I felt a sense of helplessness and outrage and did not hesitate to make my feelings known when joining a protest on 1<sup>st</sup> October outside the office of the NSW Planning Minister, Mr Rob Stokes.

I am losing faith in the expertise and independence of the IPC, but rather than giving up and remaining silent, I believe ordinary Australians like myself should continue to speak out. This is the only hope of turning the tide against the vested interests of big business and King Coal, in favour of caring for our citizens of the future of our fragile planet.

It is for this reason I welcome the opportunity to voice my objections to the proposed and potentially catastrophic Russell Vale Underground Coal Mine Expansion Project.

It is my fervent hope also, that while I may live in Mona Vale, my words will resonate with the locals of Russell Vale, who may not have had the opportunity for their voices to be heard at this Inquiry.

On a personal note, I have family born and bred in Wollongong. My niece is employed in the Public Health system as a registered nurse at Shellharbour Hospital. She has experienced first-hand over many years, the ravages and physical trauma manifested in patients which is directly attributable to the toxicity of working with coal.

The hard-working people of the Russell Vale community are expected to swallow the jobs-creation line. Despite the rhetoric, it is clear there will only be a paltry percentage of direct jobs for locals and this over a mere 5 years.

A paltry 145 jobs for 5 years - how dare this be given credence, when we have heard evidence from the experts that the project will doubtless prematurely kill roughly 5 times as many people as it employs? This makes blind faith in the jobs, jobs, jobs mantra ring hollow.

The Commission is well aware of the findings of the reputable body, the Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and Large Coal Mining Development (the IESC).

Some points from these findings are worth repeating. The IESC identified key potential impacts from the Russell Vale Underground Expansion Project including:

- \*irreversible changes in EPBC Act-listed swamps (The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999),
- \*impacts on in-stream environments and water-dependent flora and fauna,
- \*potential long-term impacts to groundwater levels and quality,
- \*an excess of copper, zinc and nickel levels in the nearby Bellambi Creek.

Other Ecosystem degradation and bushfire risk concerns have also been highlighted. The mine expansion will drain both surface and ground water from the Cataract Reservoir catchment, from the Illawarra Escarpment and from the Woronora Plateau.

As the area dries out, it will lose the ability to sustain the biodiversity of native plants, animals, birds, reptiles and insects in the area, which in turn make it more prone to bushfire risk. The

tragedies of the 2019 bushfire summer should be front and centre of any decision-making process.

We have also been reminded that the drivers of the Russell Vale project are an impoverished, foreign-owned company, who will pay no taxes and trivial mineral licence fees in Australia, with an already poor safety record, with Directors distanced from their liabilities, operating an unprecedentedly high risk mine under the water supply for Greater Sydney just to generate 145 dangerous jobs.

Last but not least - the over-riding imperative of climate change. Accept the science. The burning of fossil fuels releases greenhouse gas emissions that are responsible for climate change.

The irrefutable evidence steadily mounted at the Public Hearing that here is no justification for the proposed Russell Vale Underground Coal Mine Expansion Project. It is not in the public interest and we ask that you reject the Project and instigate a process to close the mine at Russell Vale permanently.

Commissioners - You have read 100s of submissions, you have listened to many passionate fellow Australians speaking from the heart at the Public Hearing. As you deliberate on this dangerous coal expansion project, ask yourself these questions:

- \*Do you care about social justice?
- \*Are you concerned about the health of our people?
- \*Are you concerned about economic stability and investment value?
- \*Do you care about intergenerational justice?

Every one of us should care - no exceptions - particularly those with the power to make decisions that affect us all. And, yes, I am appealing to you - the panel members of the Independent Planning Commission.

It is critical that you take heed of the Climate Change Experts. Christiana Figueres former Secretary of the UN Convention on Climate Change, writes simply and powerfully in her 2020 book 'The Future We Choose' and I quote:

**\*Social justice** - Climate Change affects the poor in every country disproportionately. The facts are irrefutable.

**\*Public Health** - The burning of fossil fuels pollutes the local ambient air with particulate matter that are so pernicious to human health that more than 7 million people world-wide die from air pollution each year. These figures speak for themselves.

**\*Economics** - It is no secret that coal has lost its financial viability and can no longer compete with cheaper and cleaner renewable energy options. We need to shift decisively into clean energy assets that will safely keep their value over the long term.

**\*Intergenerational Justice:** - We must make the hard choices now, or our children and grandchildren will be robbed of their rightful inheritance of an inhabitable planet. Who could look their children in the eye and defend decisions that jeopardised their future.

Commissioners - I rest my case. Now is your time to choose. Now is your time to act. You have a profound moral responsibility to hand down a judgement in favour of the future of our fragile planet. It is in your hands.

JOY NASON

5/18A Barrenjoey Road

MONA VALE 2103

Email: [joynason@bigpond.com](mailto:joynason@bigpond.com)

Mobile: 0416134210