

Written Submission to IPC tribunal

My name is Susan Ainge a resident of Scone.

I pay my respects to the people of the Wanarua Nation past present and future.

The purpose of this address is to object to the extension of the Mt Pleasant Mine on four grounds :-

1. PM2.5 small particulate pollution
2. Green House Gas releases, notably methane
3. Social Grounds
4. Rehabilitation Limitations in the current proposal

In detail,

1) Small particulate pollution or PM 2.5 is the more injurious to public health as its effects are cumulative and lasting.

In Mach's submission there was a report of incomplete monitoring at the Mt Pleasant operation resulting in gaps at Muswellbrook NW and Aberdeen of PM2.5 direction favoured by common prevailing winds, yet Muswellbrook has reportedly the poorest air quality of any monitored town in the State.

This small particulate air pollution will only increase with further diesel mine and road transport as well as an increase in train transport to carry the product to port.

It is worth noting here that while loads transported by road require a tarpaulin cover these coal transports have no such requirement for covers and therefore continue spreading coal dust and air pollution all the way to port.

Accurate, complete monitoring can only substantiate or dispel the forecast increased poor health projections which accompany the mine's expansion.

2) Green House Gases (GHG)– MACH Energy have stated in their submission that the expansion area between the depth of 225 and the planned base at 275 metres depth has a higher gas zone with estimated methane CH<sub>4</sub> gas levels at 3-4 metres cubed per tonne of coal, but that "technical difficulties" and costs would preclude an operation of pre-drainage to contain and remove this GHG. The cost was also proffered as an

In fact, the alternative to pre-drainage is to release the methane into the atmosphere. This is unacceptable given our current commitment to reduce not to contribute to GHG.

The voracity of MACH's estimate of 3-4 m<sup>3</sup>/tonne coal is highly questionable when adjacent underground mines, I believe have measured concentrations of methane at similar depths of 10m<sup>3</sup>/ tonne coal. This is well above acceptable levels in Australian guidelines and with our commitment to reduce emissions, any such release should be stringently avoided. Given this discrepancy it would be advisable to gain an independent and more accurate measurement of the concentration in this pit layer before the requirement of pre-drainage is waived.

3) Social - Extra employment for this region is mapped as a benefit by the MACH proposal, but this is also a cost to the community. Often the best and brighter students from the local schools are lured by the offer of high salaries in mining jobs from potential future studies evidenced by teachers from the region schools.

The Hunter Valley and in particular Muswellbrook have a critical accommodation shortage which means that higher paid mine workers often replace long term local families in rental accommodation. This displacement is not matched in the contribution that these families made to the local schools, charities, SES, Rural fire Service and other local groups. In these local services provided by volunteers no financial contribution matches feet on the ground. Long distance commuting workers in addition have no allegiance to their work locale, just utilising the infrastructure and facilities but making no contribution.

Mach's token Voluntary Plan Agreements of \$20million to Muswellbrook Council and \$6 million to Scone is mere petty cash compared to their estimated \$3Billion per year revenue from coal, which will be lost to Australia.

4) Rehabilitation - I am a former Hunter Valley resident now returned after over 50 years. In this absence and on my return, I have seen the Valley transformed from a lush verdant green and healthy ecosystem to one burnt by sulphite and other mining gas emissions and vulnerable to drought. Water tables are reduced with vast water resources dedicated to dust suppression and other mining activities and vegetation diminished.

Not that I was unaware of mining as my father was the Chief Mining Engineer at the Joint Coal Board, and early excursions with Dad were to the underground mines of the Valley.

Now after 26 years of regenerative farming I have some understanding of soil biosystems and soil rehabilitation. The "rehabilitation" that Mach pays lip service to is no more than window dressing which in no way can equate to the lost ecosystems they have removed. A scant icing of purchased topsoil on top of anaerobic clays, rock and mining debris, planted with species from "like" regions of Queensland and Victoria! This is not rehabilitation.

Furthermore, no real science has been attached to the toxic wastewater lake which is left in the old pit. The water is not fit for any form of wildlife or stock rehydration nor agriculture. As it evaporates salts will be concentrated, leaching and runoff to neighbouring aquifers will most certainly occur, endangering and poisoning the surrounding environment. Mach has indicated that it is not economic to fill and desalinate this mess – why must our valley wear that cost! Surely this is part of the rehabilitation of the site.

Thank you for the opportunity to put my objections to the Mach Energy Mt Pleasant Mine Optimisation Project.

Susan E Ainge

