

Submission in response to supplementary material on Mangolla operations extension – SSD 8642

by Dr Catherine Chicken, addressing additional material as outlined below;

- the transcript of the Commission's meeting with EPA, NSW Health and DPIE on 25 March 2021;
- the EPA and DPIE presentation material at the Commission's meeting on 25 March 2021; and
- the Applicant's Response to the Commission, dated 30 March 2021.

It is widely recognised that there is no safe level of air pollution and many large population studies throughout the world have shown that increasing air pollution, particularly from fine particulate matter, shortens lifespan. I have witnessed the deterioration in air quality in the upper reaches of the Upper Hunter (UH) valley through my time living just outside Scone over the past 20 years.

Mr Matt Riley, DPIE, in his presentation to the Commission on 31.3.21 indicated the impact climate has on annual air quality data for the UH valley and other regional and urban centres throughout NSW. Hotter, drier climate is predicted as the new normal for NSW, therefore mitigating the effects of industry-derived air pollution, a modifiable variable in the air pollution equation, must be a priority into the future.

The cumulative impacts of open-cut coal mining on the UH are significant and the impact of large scale open-cut coal mining on the air quality of the population centres of the UH are clearly shown in the slides presented by Mr Adam Gilligan, EPA, on 31.3.21 (slides 22,23) in which houses in the foreground overlook the dust bowls generated by mining activity on the edge of town, as is the case in Muswellbrook.

The scale and scope of open cut mining in the UH are the result of a planning process that does not adequately consider the health and wellbeing of residents. Clearly, air quality issues are of increasing concern for the residents of the UH as evidenced by the increase in complaints related to dust generated from mining activity from 2013 to 2018 around Muswellbrook and Singleton, with the focus shifting to Muswellbrook in later years (EPA presentation slide 6).

EPA initiatives such as Dust Stop and Bust the Dust, though significant, are not sufficient to mitigate the cumulative impacts of open cut mining in our region. The sheer magnitude of the cumulative mining activity and the subsequent vast swathes of exposed land are on such a scale that the only way to reduce impacts are to reduce this industrial activity and ensure remediation actions are undertaken in real-time.

Surely, we are at a point that necessitates a cessation of any approvals allowing more expansion of open cut mining in our area. How much air pollution are we expected to tolerate as residents of a region impacted by an industry that seemingly has no limits? Please respect our experience as residents in this area, listen to our valid concerns, and act to protect our health and well-being.

Kind regards,

Catherine Chicken

BVSc., PhD, MANZCVS