# Inquiry on the Contamination of Sydney's Drinking Water

Patrick Li 23/01/2025

Submission overview:

This submission is about the opposition of the Centennial Coal Mine expansion that has for the first time, posed a great risk of Sydney's drinking water supply, famous for being clean as instant drinking water. The leak, or spill of these poisonous chemicals from the coal mine will put our health in jeopardy because the chemicals will leak into the food chain. Here are the overview points about the mine:

1. The proposed Centennial Coal Mine sits next to the Garden of Stone State Conservation Area, an expanse home to more than 80 threatened species and 16 endangered communities. Mining activity has dried up several peat swamps surrounding the area.
2. The coal mine will drain over 20 billion litres of ground water or aquifer, which is the cause of drying out of peat swamps and ground water.
3. Currently, up to 5 billion litres of water is stored both in Angus Place and Springvale Mines. Centennial Mine's proposed leakage of mine waste into Sydney's drinking water supply was to make way for more mining activity.
4. Centennial Mine currently provides water for the Mount Piper Power Station which uses its water for the cooling towers through the treatment plant. However this year, there is a planned outage for maintenance and that Mount Piper will cease using the water during this period.

Here is the current area of concern for the environment:

1. Centennial Mine wants to release 42 million litres of mine wastewater into the Thompson Creek Reservoir every 111 days to compensate for the Mount Piper outages. The 42 million litres will consist of 18 million litres of treated and 24 million litres of untreated mine wastewater from the release.
2. Thompson Creek Reservoir has a small waterway that flows via the Cox River in the world heritage listed National Parks and eventually towards the Warragamba Dam.
3. We have noted that Centennial Mine has proposed to release up to 26.5 million litres (16.5 million litres of treated and 10 million litres of untreated) wastewater daily into the Wangcol Creek for up to 4 years straight.
4. This will add to the already strained Thompson Creek Reservoir totalling up to 68.5 million litres of wastewater that threatens to leak all the way to Warragamba Dam.
5. The iconic Australian platypus will have its habitat and health compromised as a result of the mine water leakage. With overall water and air pollution levels rise, experts strongly warn against partially treated wastewater because it will not address but actually worsen the impacts of pollution. Once pollution is discharged, there is no way to reverse the damage.
6. Possible composition of the contaminated water would include but not limited to; tar, soot, dirt, fine particles of mine, other heavy metals and excessive

salinity. Platypus' sense of smell to food will be compromised by the pollution, leading to the shortage of food supply and eventually death by starvation.

7. Unfortunately, the Mount Piper power station is scheduled to remain open until at least 2040. Centennial is looking for opportunities to use Thompson Creek Reservoir as a 'discharge site' during maintenance periods (111 days per maintenance) for up to 15 years within its operational timeframe.

What the Environmental Protection Agency should do about Centennial Mine's wastewater discharge proposal:

1. EPA should regulate Centennial Mine to treat its wastewater accordingly to remove harmful chemicals such as heavy metals, salt, brine, tar, and soot to ensure that the pollution levels are low enough to be categorised as safe. The Zero Release code must be implemented when the water treatment plant is being approved. Otherwise, the wastewater will threaten both our drinking water, and animals and habitats.
2. Test that the current water quality which is released is safe before releasing. Otherwise, further treatment of wastewater needs to be undertaken. It is advisable to install some water filters to filter out some of the harmful chemicals that are present in the wastewater release.

Yours sincerely,

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