

SUBMISSION: OBJECTION TO WILPINJONG COAL MINE MODIFICATION 3 (PIT 8 EXTENSION)

I wish to object to Peabody Energy's proposed Wilpinjong Mine Modification 3.

This proposal should **not** be treated as a simple modification of the existing approval — it is, in substance, a **new project**.

The proposed new mining area falls outside the current mining lease. It pushes operations right to the edge of Wollar village, and – in truth - represents the first stage of a much larger planned expansion, one that would effectively surround the village.

Further, it would destroy new areas of Aboriginal heritage, encroach on the Wollar Creek catchment, and cause additional biodiversity and water impacts not contemplated under the existing approval.

These are not incremental changes; they are fundamental alterations that require full assessment as a new project under NSW planning law.

Wollar at a Crossroads: Coal or Clean Energy

Wollar sits at the edge of the Central West Orana Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) — the first approved REZ in NSW and the anchor for the region's transition to clean energy and long-term sustainable employment. Continuing to expand coal mining here directly undermines that transition.

This mine extension would compete with renewable projects for land, infrastructure, and workforce. It would physically and symbolically tie Wollar to the past just as the region has the opportunity to move forward.

The NSW Government has recognised the Central West's need to diversify and plan for a post-coal economy; this proposal runs directly counter to that direction.

Social Impacts and Community Recovery

I have seen firsthand what mining — and Peabody's Wilpinjong mine in particular — has done to Wollar. The village has been hollowed out — homes bought up, residents, and community life dismantled. The few who remain have worked hard to restore a sense of stability and belonging.

The current approval had anticipated a ramp-down of operations by 2025, and remaining residents had been planning for recovery. Instead, this proposal would see open-cut mining right extended to the village's boundary. The ongoing uncertainty, noise, dust and vibration would make genuine recovery impossible.

The project's own Social Impact Assessment admits that not proceeding would produce *seven positive social outcomes* and only *two negatives*. That should speak for itself.

Cultural Heritage and Environmental Damage

The area between Goulburn River National Park and Munghorn Gap Nature Reserve is rich in biodiversity and cultural heritage. Over a thousand Aboriginal sites have already been recorded around Wilpinjong; Mod 3 would destroy at least fifteen more. The loss is not just physical — it erases cultural continuity and spiritual connection for the Wiradjuri people.

The proposed expansion would also obliterate key breeding habitats for the Large-eared Pied Bat and Eastern Cave Bat, both endangered species, and further fragment corridors used by the Regent Honeyeater and Koala. Landforms and habitat at the centre of a recognised microbat hotspot would be removed entirely — an impact described even in technical reports as *significant and irreversible*.

Water and Pollution Impacts

The mine has already demonstrated a poor record in water management. What was originally touted as a zero discharge mine has proven to be anything but.

The proposed expansion would cause groundwater drawdown exceeding 20 metres and reduce flows to Wollar Creek by more than 21 million litres per year representing a significant impact on local ecological health and, quite obviously, bore water availability to properties in the village and surrounds.

No adequate baseline monitoring has been done in the proposed extension area, yet approval is sought to deepen and widen disturbance. Increased salinity in mine discharges — up to 3.5 tonnes of salt per day — poses a real risk to downstream users and the Goulburn River system.

Climate and Economic Justification

The expansion would release more than 25 million tonnes of additional greenhouse gases — at a time when every tonne of emissions counts. The claimed public benefit of \$21 million does not come close to covering the cost of climate-driven damage and recovery from extreme weather events that such emissions help fuel.

There is no economic necessity for this project. The Central West currently faces a labour shortage in construction, housing and renewable energy projects — industries that build the future rather than prolong the past.

Personal Connection and Closing

I have a personal connection to this region. I owned a farm in the nearby Bylong Valley through the 2000s and 2010s and continue to hold property within the Mid-Western Regional Council area. I have watched over the years as Wollar was transformed from a cohesive rural community into something more closely resembling a mining buffer zone. Seeing this latest proposal — bringing open-cut mining right to the village edge — is deeply depressing.

For the sake of Wollar's future, for the integrity of the planning system, and for the broader transition our region must make, this project must be refused. It is not a modification. It is a **new project** — one that would impose new and unacceptable costs on people, land, water, and climate.

I strongly object to the Wilpinjong Mine Modification 3 proposal.

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