

Objection to Wilpinjong Mod 3 – Pit 8 Extension (SSD-6764 Mod 3)

I am writing to object to the proposed Wilpinjong Mod 3 – Pit 8 Extension and request that this development be refused as a modification as it is not substantially the same mine, nor the same impacts. It falls outside of the existing Mining Lease area and is part of a larger expansion project. If it is to go ahead at all, it should be resubmitted as a new mine with a full environmental, social and financial assessment.

Furthermore, I have the following reasons for objecting:

- Adverse climate impacts
- Adverse impact on biodiversity
- Adverse impacts on local residents
- Benefits of the proposal are overstated

ADVERSE CLIMATE IMPACTS

- The year 2024 was the world's warmest on record globally, and the first calendar year in which global temperatures exceeded 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. This must be a turning point for Australia and the world. The Paris Agreement looks at temperatures over decades, not a single year, but 2024 temperatures tell us the goal to limit global warming to an increase of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels is in serious trouble. This record-breaking global heat is primarily driven by our ongoing greenhouse gas emissions, caused by the burning of fossil fuels, such as thermal coal from Wilpinjong.
- This project will release over 25 MT of additional Greenhouse Gas emissions. This will increase extreme heat days, increase ferocity of bushfires, increase the frequency and destructiveness of flooding and increase loss of life from these extreme weather events. Have these impacts on the local community and environment been assessed?
- Clearly, the need to rapidly reduce our greenhouse gas emissions is now more urgent than ever – the line must be drawn for no new mines and no extensions to existing mines. Every approval builds the precedent for more approvals. It is time our Government put the safety of Australia's people and environment ahead of profits for mining companies.

ADVERSE IMPACY ON BIODIVERSITY

- I am concerned that the proposal understates the biodiversity significance of the area. The proposed extension of mine disturbance will significantly impact two critically endangered ecological communities (CEEC) including the Box Gum Woodland CEEC and eleven endangered fauna species, including the Large-eared Pied Bat, Eastern Cave Bat, regent honeyeater and koala.
- The NSW Government bionet site <https://threatenedspecies.bionet.nsw.gov.au/profile?id=10841> lists the regent honeyeater as: **Conservation status in NSW: Critically Endangered** . For distribution: "There are several known key breeding areas, four of them in NSW - Capertee Valley, Lower Hunter Valley, **Mudgee/Wollar** and Bundarra-Barraba regions."
- Speaking as someone who has seen a pair of regent honeyeaters in the wild, I can only request that there be no further loss of habitat, if we are serious about saving these birds from extinction.
- The loss of shelter and foraging material for animals is not the only loss – the loss of the threatened vegetation is also an issue, from a biodiversity conservation point of view, but also loss of sequestered carbon. The loss of 155Ha of native veg for this modification is unacceptable, particularly when it forms a wildlife corridor between the locally significant conservation areas of Munghorn Gap Nature Reserve and Goulburn River National Park.

ADVERSE IMPACY ON LOCAL RESIDENTS

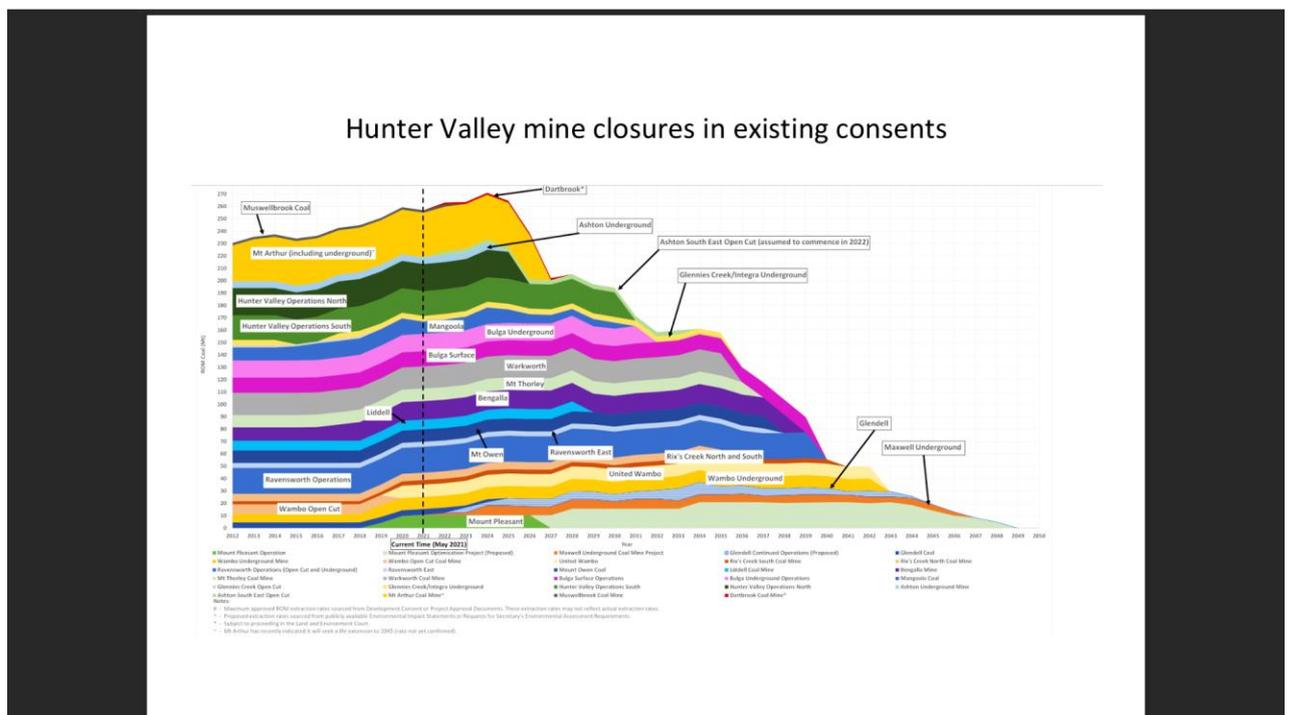
- I live close to an open cut coal mine in the lower Hunter Valley. I know full-well that residents suffer impacts from surrounding mines – dust, noise, light spill, blasting etc. I think the people of Wollar are in danger of being surrounded by mining operations and the impacts on them would be worse than what we suffer.
- These days, I only complain when the noise from the mine is so loud that I have to turn the TV up to hear it over the mine noise. It is rare that I get out of bed to complain about the noise, and generally don't bother the next day. The resulting discussion with their environmental officer often identifies the

operation that was taking place to create the excessive noise, but nothing seems to happen to prevent it from actually recurring and I have no reason to believe that Wilpinjong are any more responsive to residents' complaints.

- Most people in Wollar and surrounds are there for the rural pursuits, hoping to enjoy peace and quiet and the contact with the local wildlife. No doubt they have been looking forward to Wilpinjong ending operations in 2033 and are devastated to hear that the operation may be extended. The destruction of their village and the buyout of surrounding properties have no doubt added to the mental stress suffered by the remaining residents.

BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSAL ARE OVERSTATED

- If every mine in the Hunter Valley shut down in line with its current consent, see below, closures would be spread from now to 2048. Smaller numbers of people would be made redundant at any one time and support services and employment opportunities are more likely to be available and effective. Extending mines only holds our economy back from investing in industries of the future.



- Having been made redundant by the closure of BHP's Newcastle Steelworks, I can say that the certainty about the closure date was a positive. It allowed people to look at their commitments and financial situation and make decisions in their own best interests on whether to stay and take a redundancy at the end, or take the next job available. By constantly changing the date of the closure, mines like Wilpinjong are undermining the trust of their workforce. When they do finally close, there will be people unprepared for it, expecting another extension, because that's what's always happened in the past.

- It is ironic that Wollar is on the edge of the Central West Orana Renewable Energy Zone. Renewable energy projects are struggling to get enough people to build their infrastructure and here we have a coal mine tying up a workforce that could be readily transitioning to ongoing renewable energy jobs. Wilpinjong is part of a dying industry – far better to free up employees to take advantage of renewable energy jobs. Better for them and better for the environment.

- As ever, this application reminds us about how important coal royalties are, and how they contribute to schools and hospitals. The Australia Institute <https://australiainstitute.org.au/post/coal-royalties-are-a-tiny-part-of-the-nsw-budget/> has done the research , and reported that:
 - In 2022-23, coal royalties were only 4.2% of total NSW Government revenue: about \$4.5 billion. That figure was unusually high because global coal prices went up after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.
 - From 2013-14 to 2022-23, royalties averaged just 2.4% of government revenue: between \$1 and \$2 billion.
 - For comparison, the NSW coal industry exported almost \$60 billion of coal in 2022-23.
 - What's more, those royalties don't fund specific programs or services, like schoolteachers or nurses: they're just lumped with the rest of government revenue. That means they fund on average only 2.4% of any schoolteacher or nurse.

- **We're tired of the coal industry telling us how important they are! By the time you take into account the health impacts of particulate pollution, loss of biodiversity, loss of CO2 sequestration from land clearing, impacts of severe weather etc it is clear that a "net public benefit" of \$21m is nowhere near enough to compensate for the impacts of this proposal.**

I urge you to consider my arguments in your assessment of this "modification". The game has changed – you can't keep automatically consenting to new and extended coal projects! We have seen where that leads and it is not acceptable that corporate profits are put before human life, property, wildlife and the environment. I urge you to reject this "modification"!

Yours faithfully,

Janet Murray