

I object to the increase on open-cut mining that will occur as a result of HVO South Mod.5

- The increased extraction rate of 4mtpa will cause increased noise, dust and blasting impacts in an area of the Hunter Valley that is already experiencing massive cumulative impacts from open-cut mining of coal
- The increased overburden height of 80m will cause visual amenity impacts in a vibrant tourism area.
- Increased open-cut mining leads to more dust at a regional level with consequent health impacts in an area already suffering disproportionate levels of respiratory disease. The costs arising from this are borne by the same government coffers that eagerly accept the prospect of revenue from royalties. Thus, it is not reasonable to place these costs outside of the entire economic analysis
- The increased drawdown of groundwater by an additional 2.8 m will have a cumulative impact of nearly 10m drop in groundwater sources. Australia is an island that should carefully guard both food and water security; if Australia was ever forced by world changes or events to be independent, a reliable and clean water supply is vital. A value should be placed on water and subsequent food security.
- The final void will increase from 404ha to 523ha and will be a perpetual groundwater sink. This poses another threat to future generations. The cost of filling and rehabilitating final voids has been cited as making open-cut mining non-viable economically. It is ludicrous to suggest this as a reasonable excuse for leaving what will become a “toxic sink”. Such reasoning defies every rule of intergenerational equity. There should be no final void.
- Threatened populations of River Red Gums, Hunter Flood Plain Red Gum Woodland and Hunter Valley River Oak, and the ephemeral wetland, Carrington Billabong, will be impacted. Australia already has a poor history of ecological guardianship. There is no reason to worsen this reputation.
- Discharges of polluted mine water into the Hunter River will increase, another failure in ecological guardianship!
- The area of concentrated mining activity in this part of the Hunter already has too great a cumulative impact on citizens unfortunate enough to have had their rural lifestyle stealthily and steadily destroyed by mining activity. The rest of the world is actively turning away from coal as a power source; any ‘gains’ will be short-lived. Moreover Yancoal is a Chinese Company with the Chinese government the major shareholder. Under the Chinese Australian FTA there is the possibility of such a company shedding local labour for the far cheaper option of ‘imported’ labour with Enterprise Agreements that would allow for lower wage structures.
- Local community members are seeing their way of life, their health and their property values steadily destroyed for a resource that is experiencing falling total demand world-wide. Regulations favour the mining proponent to the detriment of the community, leaving many members of the community stranded on their properties unable to sell and unable to avail

themselves of mitigation or acquisition. "Solastalgia" is not an academic concept it is reality for more and more Australian citizens living in The Hunter.

- AND FOR WHAT?

A few more years of mining royalties, forget income tax, mining companies tax structure has ensured that if they pay tax at all it is minimal. Royalties do not compensate for this loss. The promise of Australian jobs and subsequent flow on to the local economy is by no means guaranteed under the terms of the China -Australia FTA. The health costs, legacy of final voids and loss of food and water security far outweigh the short term benefits.

For all of the reasons outlined above, this Application should be denied.

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