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Submission in objection to HVO South - Modification 5 - Progression of Mining project

This is a submission in objection to the proposed Modification 5 of the HVO South coal mining project.

If approved, the project will increase the impacts of mining on residents and water resources in an area that is already suffering from an over-concentration of coal mines.

The project would increase noise pollution levels for surrounding residences, including the community of Maison Dieu. Residents of this community – while they do not meet the criteria for "significant impacts" under the deeply flawed *Voluntary Land Acquisition and Mitigation Policy* (VLAMP), already complain of too much noise pollution from the surrounding coal mines, and this problem would worsen if Mod 5 is approved. The proponent claims that many of the residents projected to suffer increased noise pollution may be afforded acquisition rights under VLAMP for the nearby United Wambo project. But this project is not approved, and should not be approved, and in any case the VLAMP affords no adequate protection to residents.

Similarly for air quality. The EIS notes that there will be no residential properties experiencing exceedences of the VLAMP criteria of 30ug/m³ for PM10 pollution, except for two residences which already have acquisition rights from other mines. However, one of these residences has acquisition rights from the South East Open Cut project, which it is very possible may never proceed, and for which the proponent currently has an application to remove those acquisition rights if the mine does not proceed. In any case, the Mod 5 project would increase levels of harmful particulate pollution in an area that is already subject to some of the state's worst pollution levels, due to the proliferation of coal mines in the area.

The project would significantly increase the already extreme impact of the HVO South operation on groundwater resources. North of Wollombi Brook, it would increase groundwater drawdown by 2.8m, with a cumulative impact of nearly 10m. The general decrease in groundwater availability, in an already stressed area, that this project would cause may impact on groundwater dependent ecosystems.

The proponent makes much of the apparently improved outcome on final void design by the proposed modification, as although it would increase in size, it would be further from the Hunter River and contain more "usable" surface area due to the decreased wall slopes. However, the legacy of final voids is one the community broadly finds unacceptable in the first place. The proponent should take the opportunity of its modification application to update its mine plan in order to restore and improve the original landscape, with no final void permitted, in accordance with community expectations.

The project should not be approved.