

AYCC Wollongong Submission to Proposed Dendrobium Extension

The Wollongong branch of the Australian Youth Climate Coalition (AYCC) objects to the proposed extension of South 32's Dendrobium Mine.

The AYCC is an organization of young people concerned with the future. This proposal directly threatens our future in two key ways:

This extension of this mine will damage Sydney's water catchment (that also provides water to Wollongong). Previous long wall mining expansions under the water catchment at Dendrobium, Russell Vale and Metropolitan coal mines have led to the destruction of the rivers and swamps above. Not only do mines such as these destroy the natural habitat of the land above, they also drain the water supply of Australia's largest city. Hydro Engineering and Consulting estimate that the peak outflow of water will reach 27.6ML per day in 2035¹. If this rate were to be sustained for the entire year, we would expect 10,074ML to be lost that year. To put this in perspective, this quantity of water is 0.79% of all the water in the entire Sydney catchment right now². The corresponding proportion (0.79%) of Sydney's population is 43,000 people. If mining under the catchment continues, today's young people may face a future in which Sydney is constantly in drought, due to a sieve-like water catchment.

In addition to the extensive direct effects of the proposed expansion, this project would also contribute to the global threat of climate change. The science on climate change is clear – the world must act now to mitigate the worst of what is coming. The coal industry wishes the world to believe that coal is necessary for electricity and steel production. This is a false impression designed to keep a dirty and dwindling industry alive for a few more decades. There is an abundance of economically competitive renewable alternatives for generating electricity, and hydrogen-fueled manufacturing of carbon-neutral steel is just around the corner³ (and electrolytic methods of steel production are in development). This is no time to be investing in the future of the dying coal industry, and no time to be pumping further CO₂ into our atmosphere. The producers of coal are just as responsible for the emissions as those who burn it, and those who permit the mining of coal are just as responsible as those who mine it. This perspective is endorsed by the result of the Rocky Hill Coal Project appeal to the N.S.W. Land and Environment Court, delivered in February. The court ruled that when considering projects in industries such as mining, “the consent authority must consider an assessment of the greenhouse gas emissions (including downstream emissions) of the development, and must do so having regard to any applicable State or national policies, programs or guidelines concerning greenhouse gas emissions”⁴.

Tackling climate change must be a global effort, with as many parties on board as possible. Do not be the one that lets the team down. Do not approve the extension of Dendrobium Mine.

Sincerely, and with hope for our futures,

The Wollongong AYCC team:

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¹ https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/project/9696?fbclid=IwAR2LvKYEF-mSbWo0HpLWPuqQDPTe0s8ENcmp7v2blDowEx_hfTUyiebYtWQ 26A. Appendix C – Surface Water Assessment_Part1, p. ix.

² <https://www.waternsw.com.au/supply/Greater-Sydney/greater-sydneys-dam-levels> accessed 16/09/2019

³ <https://www.euractiv.com/section/energy/interview/hybrit-ceo-our-pilot-steel-plant-will-only-emit-water-vapour/>

⁴ https://www.caselaw.nsw.gov.au/decision/5c59012ce4b02a5a800be47f#_Toc431203