

**Supplementary Submission on Wongawilli Colliery Modification: Extension of Life.
by Murray Scott 2015 July 6**

Dept. of Planning,

Please accept this supplement to my brief summary forwarded late 2014 July 6.

I object to this application for extension of the the operating life of the Wongawilli Colliery.

Of all the places to conduct coal mining operations, water catchment areas are among the worst choice. As a symbol of perverted priorities horse breeding for the gambling industry merits greater consideration than secure water supplies. Longwall operations, second only to open-cut pits, erode the qualities relied upon for clean, reliable water supply. Starting with initial survey drilling then ventilation shaft development and ongoing monitoring, vehicle traffic exposes the previously self-sustaining bush vegetation to invasion by weeds and plant pathogens. Over a human lifetime that can result in profound changes to vegetation thence erosion and siltation. As mining proceeds, it has been abundantly established through successive PAC submissions and hearings, from volunteer organisations, academics, individual citizens and even Government Authorities, that longwall subsidence cracks stream beds, drains swamps, releases methane to the atmosphere and mineral-contaminated water percolating from upstream cracks.

I acknowledge the company's efforts in struggling to restart and expand this mine following financial and operational difficulties in this and the Russel Vale Colliery. With the reported economic outlook for steel production in China and India it appears unlikely however that the claimed employment gains can be lasting or secure. As national governments prepare for the Paris Climate Conference our grandchildren will be profoundly affected by the greenhouse gas emission constraints leaders can negotiate. It is in all our interests that the slump in coal demand and price is permanent. Even without such agreement, the slump is likely to persist for the 5 year duration of the requested extension period. Although even short-term jobs are welcome to mature-age workers, it is folly to recruit youthful workers to an industry whose products are recognised as endangering safety and prosperity through climate change.

It is often claimed that while steaming coal may be replaced with other energy sources, coking coal is essential for the supply of materials to support economic growth. The atmosphere however does not discriminate between oxidation of hydrocarbons for energy or smelting and at approximately one third of greenhouse emissions, present coking coal demand for steel and aluminium cannot be exempted from emission constraints, and together with other existing and planned Australian mines, the 100 Mtonnes that Woolongong Coal proposes to extract from the Western extension will certainly collide with Australia's share of the allowable global CO₂e emission budget. We look forward to more efficient material recycling, a return to wooden structures and substitution of some carbon-containing wastes as ore reducing agents but these are limited by other sustainability constraints. We can no longer assume continued global growth in materials consumption.

Modern coal mines are far less dangerous than those of a century ago. Nevertheless it is curious that the letter from David Clarkson letter of May 2015 requesting the licence modification:

https://majorprojects.affinitylive.com/public/a3b719b763b5b5eccc382d77297a355/Wongawilli%20Colliery%20Modification%201_Extension%20of%20Life.pdf

makes no mention of the Nebo mine collapse that resulted in burial of the longwall mining machinery, fortunately without casualties:

<http://www.illawarramercury.com.au/story/2317408/patient-wollongong-coal-miners-let-go/>.

Referring to consequent job losses at the mine in May 2014 and previously under Gujarat management, in the above report Wollongong Coal Chairman Jasbir Singh said :

“...it was a difficult time for the workers but it was necessary to downsize the workforce to bring the collieries in line with current market conditions and production levels.”

“While these reductions in jobs are essential at the moment, Wollongong Coal is committed to further developing and operating their underground operations, despite these unprecedented economic times which sees current global coking coal market prices at historical lows,” he said.”

Mr Singh is clearly gambling on a return to higher coal prices in future. This gamble extends to the future “employment for up to 300 personnel” promised by Mr Clarkson and the capacity of the company to complete the “Rehabilitation of the site.” which was a condition of PA 09_0161 authorising subsequent activities at Wongawilli Colliery”. This application for a 5 year extension of operations indeed suggests that the company lacks the capital to comply with PA 09_0161. If Mr Singh's gamble on profitability within 5 years does not bear fruit and the company becomes insolvent, what recourse does the NSW Government have for rehabilitating the site to prevent ongoing pollution from derelict workings within the Sydney Catchment Special Areas? The recent collapse of the washery dump at Clarence Colliery, the continuing heavy metal pollution from the defunct Invincible colliery into the Grose River and ongoing pollution from Brennans Creek into the Georges River highlight the necessity for adequate funds to cover the costs of site and hydrological rehabilitation.

For these reasons I believe that time has run out for Wongawilli mine. The Company should be held to its rehabilitation commitments now instead of deferral to pour further capital into extensions.

Murray Scott