

From :Matthew Kenneth Washington
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November 9, 2012

To : Mr Hazzard
Planning Minister
Department of Planning and Infrastructure
GPO Box 39
Sydney 2001

Dear Sir

I am writing to voice my concerns over the planned Cobbora coal Mine. I am a resident of the Blue Mountains and know the value of native bushland and the natural services such areas provide. The Cobbora coal mine, if built, will cost taxpayers more than \$3 billion, destroy nearly two thousand hectares of wildlife habitat, and will provide half-priced coal to our state's polluting power stations for more than 20 years. The impacts on the environment itself will be felt for generations and the value to the state of NSW long term appears to be largely fanciful.

The justification for the mine is based on incorrect projections of demand for coal-fired electricity over the next 10 years. But studies show that the demand for coal-fired power has dropped significantly since this project was first proposed, as part of the Keneally government's electricity privatisation deal. Renewable energy technologies, on the other hand are well established, well understood by local industry and effective viable job creators long term.

My perspective is not base, somehow ideologically on poor foundations as is sometimes portrayed by certain parts of the media. As an educated, responsible public servant, I believe that citizens should participate in and contribute to important issues that will affect us all. After all, only through good dialogue, discussion and debate can we hope to achieve better public policy outcomes. But in the matter of this proposed coal mine the choices appear to be quite stark! As you know the Cobbora Coal project is proposed in central west NSW north-west of Mudgee and east of Dubbo, an area I know well.

It is a state-owned coal mining project tied to the sale of the power stations. It will in fact lock NSW into coal-fired electricity generation until at least 2036. Hence this mine's repercussions will be felt for many many years to come.

Further the proposal is to mine 20mtpa (million tonnes per annum) to produce 12mtpa of usable coal – but it is extremely poor quality product with high ash content. The project aims to provide cheap domestic coal to power stations in the Upper Hunter and Central Coast. But there is also the question of the health impacts of using poor

quality coal which have not been assessed. And if this issue also becomes part of the impacts generated by this mine local voters are unlikely to forgive or to forget.

The justification for the project is based on incorrect projections of demand for coal-fired electricity over the next 10 years. Demand has dropped significantly since this project was proposed. Hence initial economic arguments have receded and now appear to be ill founded.

The price of black coal on the export market has also dropped below the projections used to justify the need to source cheaper coal for domestic use.

To top it all the mine will cost the NSW taxpayer approx \$3.4 billion and will be run at a loss! It is a direct subsidy to power generators in NSW, which is another issue the electorate is not likely to ignore when such are raised !. The argument for continued coal-fired electricity in comparison to the long-term benefits of renewable energy sources has not been made.

The current governments closed mind to these real and obvious issues will have consequences at the ballot box that no politicians will enjoy. Clearly the Taxpayer's money would be better invested in renewable energy sources and the natural bushland not despoiled.

And importantly the project has a very large footprint and will cause major environmental impacts on woodland habitat as well as groundwater and surface water sources and loss of at least 79 Aboriginal cultural heritage sites.

Further the mine will need to use up to 3,700 ML (million litres) of water per year from surface water and groundwater interception. The use of high security licenced water from the Cudgegong River will threaten the water security of the Mudgee region wine and tourism industries. It could also threaten the long –term security of urban water supply from Windamere Dam. As noted initially the benefits of this propose mine appear to be fanciful.

To summarise I set out key points which should be seen for what they are, very persuasive, ie that :

1. Cobbora Coal project is inappropriate investment of \$3.4 billion of NSW taxpayers' money;
2. The project justification is based on outdated electricity demand and coal price projections, whereas the price of energy sourced from renewable technologies continues to come down!

3. The project will generate additional greenhouse gas emissions conflicting with State and Federal policy to reduce climate change impacts, when clear alternative and less polluting technologies are available now;
4. The project will disturb approx 47km² of land with important high conservation and agricultural value; And it also it appears that national party constituents are waking- up to the issue of the predation upon such valuable arable lands and valuable resources of clean water catchments;
5. The project will destroy 1,867ha of significant woodland providing habitat for 39 threatened species, including nationally listed endangered species;
6. The project will destroy significant Aboriginal cultural heritage sites;
7. The project will compete with the Mudgee wine and tourism industry for water supply during drought conditions; Any damage to this well known and successful wine industry ,with its spin off value in tourism, will not be welcomed by local voters.

In the light of these matters, outlined above, I urge you to re-consider giving approval to this Cobbora Coal project . It exhibits all the qualities of a what is planning, environmental and a political disaster. It is inappropriate expenditure of taxpayer moneys (given viable and better renewables), will spoil significant natural and heritage areas and my possible cause long term damage to the local community's health.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my submission..

Yours Sincerely,

Matthew K Washington

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