

## **Submission of Objection to Cobbora Mine Proposal.**

2012 November 13  
Murray Scott  
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Attn. Stephen O'Donohue.

As a taxpayer and concerned citizen, I object to the NSW Government investing around \$3.4b in a destructive project designed to extend for decades an obsolete, damaging, and unhealthy system for generating electricity. It would lock NSW into coal-fired electricity generation until at least 2036, defeating the implementation of clean renewable power technologies, sabotaging Australia's diplomatic leverage in negotiating global emission controls for greenhouse gasses.

The proposed extraction of 20mtpa to produce 12mtpa of usable coal means that it is an extremely poor quality product with high ash content. The local health impacts of using poor quality coal around power stations in the Upper Hunter and Central Coast have not been assessed.

The project aims to provide cheap domestic coal to power stations, an aim based on incorrect projections of demand for coal-fired electricity over the next 10 years. Those projections are outdated and wrong in many respects. Electricity demand has dropped significantly since this project was proposed. A parallel drop in the export price of steaming coal has negated the projections used to justify the need to source cheaper coal for domestic use. The mine will be run at a loss, a direct subsidy to power generators in NSW, presumably intended to bolster the sale price of obsolete power stations. This market distortion is pure folly, unjustified by any legitimate economic, workforce, social or environmental benefit. Any argument for continued coal-fired electricity in comparison to the long-term benefits of renewable energy sources has not been made. Tax payer's money would be better invested in dismantling the fossil-fuel dependence of NSW.

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.

The clearing of 1,867ha woodland habitat will impact on species listed for national protection: eg Grassy Box Woodland; endangered and vulnerable plants, including 100% loss of the local population of *Tylophora linearis*, endangered bird species including australasian bittern, malleefowl, regent honeyeater, superb parrot; and vulnerable microbat species - southern long-eared bat, large-eared pied bat. A large number of threatened woodland birds protected under the NSW Threatened Species Act were also recorded in the area of impact - brown tree creeper, diamond firetail, glossy black-cockatoo, grey-crowned babbler, hooded robin, speckled warbler, varied sittella, masked owl, barking owl, powerful owl.

The introduction of biodiversity offsets by the previous government represented environmental naivete, clearly illustrated by this instance. The replacement of high conservation value habitat, especially tree hollows, in slow growing woodland species takes centuries. It is in no way equivalent to tree planting on devastated mining spoil dumps.

The mine is expected to use up to 3,700 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.

The NSW Government has purchased 68 of 90 properties in the affected area. The loss of farming community and broadscale food production has not been adequately assessed. The cost benefit analysis for the project has not taken into account the social disruption; competition for workforce with other industries, particularly the agricultural industry across western NSW; or the costs of major infrastructure upgrades, particularly rail lines, to accommodate additional coal transport. Towns and properties along the coal chain will be impacted by additional noise and dust from increased coal train movements.

It is not too late to abandon this dysfunctional project, a carryover of the worst aspects of last-century's state monopoly of electricity infrastructure. It will not generate revenue quickly enough to assist NSW budgets for present Government, nor does it promote long-term prosperity.

Restore the farming and woodland, the communities that depend on it, the wildlife it supports.