

## **OBJECTION TO THE COBBORA COAL MINE – Application No: 10-0001**

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I, Sidney John Wilcox of Unit 82, Bimbimbie Retirement Village, 34 Monaro St., Merimbula, NSW, 2548 submit my very strong objection to the proposed development of a state-owned coal mine at Cobbora near Dubbo.

At a time in human history when carbon emissions are such a threat to the wellbeing of planet earth it is unbelievable that such a large development is planned and when the Federal Government has put a price on carbon it makes no sense to be developing such a coal mine particularly one subsidised by the taxpayers when the cost of this development could instead be used for the development of renewable energy.

### **I also make the following points of objection to Preferred Project Report (PPR):**

1. The economic assessment of the project and response to submissions has not adequately addressed the cost of a state-owned coal mine to the taxpayers of NSW.
2. The project cannot guarantee a *'reliable, secure and economically stable domestic coal supply (to) NSW generators'* nor can it guarantee *'affordable electricity in NSW.'*
3. The justification for the mine is based on contracts negotiated by the ALP Govt as part of the Gentrader deal. These could be filled through other arrangements.
4. The PPR does not justify the increase in water demand for mining operations from the previous prediction of 3,700 ML per year up to 4,340 ML per year.
5. The increased pump rate from the Cudgegong River and access to higher natural flows has not been adequately assessed.
6. The PPR will increase the area of destroyed woodland by 92 ha including an additional 11 ha of threatened ecological communities.
7. The ecological footprint of the mine is too high and cannot be adequately offset. The PPR does not identify a final offset package because this is not achievable.
8. The increased height of over burden emplacements by 20m will increase dust emissions. The air quality model needs to be redone using all available meteorological information.
9. The proposal to implement the draft *'Rail Infrastructure Noise Policy'* will disadvantage local residents affected by increased noise from the proposed rail loop.
10. The issue of train length on the Ulan line has not been addressed as identified in the ARTC 2012 – 2020 Rail Corridor Capacity Strategy.

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In addition I note that -

The coal is extremely poor quality product with high ash content and the health impacts of using poor quality coal have not been assessed.

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.

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.

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. The argument for continued coal-fired electricity in comparison to the long-term benefits of renewable energy sources has not been made. Taxpayer's money would be better invested in renewable energy sources.

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 1,959ha 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.

The mine will need to use up to 4,340 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.

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.

Submitted by Sidney Wilcox, 4<sup>th</sup> March, 2013