

TO: Plan_comment@planning.nsw.gov.au
OBJECTION: Cobbora Coal Mine

RE: Application 10-0001

From: Bev Atkinson,
67 Park St, Scone NSW 2337, 02 6545 3005
To whom it may concern:

2nd March, 2013

Thankyou for receiving my previous comments, and forwarding the responses.
I see the coal dump has been moved away from the watercourse. Very good.

WATER AND ECONOMICS

However the water situation troubles me still. The Cudgegong is a very little river, which hardly ever fills the Windermere Dam even now. Cobbora mine wants a huge amount of water both from river and underground, to wash this coal because it is of contaminated quality. Considering also that more volume has to be processed per yield, than for coal of better quality, is this any kind of value to the public for huge loss and investment? Is all the coal in Cobbora of this low grade?

We hear that lower grade coal damages elements within the power stations. No matter how cheap the coal, any savings are surely offset by extra maintenance and replacements. The discarded parts become useless, lost investment, useful only to be recycled expensively. The entire replacement process, labour, importing etc, is a continual drain against profits. The local power stations have had their day already. Why prop them up?

We have to wonder whether this poor coal is worth the trouble being taken for it. Especially so, since the high grade coal now exported, may well be begging a buyer in a few years time, leaving Cobbora superfluous.

INFRASTRUCTURE; COSTS AND LOSSES NOT CONSIDERED SUFFICIENTLY.

The public must pay for the rail and road works associated; we are subsidising the mine with our taxes even before we buy its supposedly 'cheap' electricity. So how does this mine benefit any Australian? We don't even manufacture the machinery imported to dig it out.

Coal is pushing infrastructure also, around Scone where I live. It is the Miner who should be paying for every piece of infrastructure arising from its freighting of coal; not we the taxpayers.

And that infrastructure should be placed way out of any town, not in it. DO NOT WRECK SCONE, DO NOT WRECK GULGONG: these towns matter. All towns matter.

The coal trains would become a menace and a blight in quiet, historical and delightful Gulgong, benefiting nobody, and affecting everyone, just as happens here. The unique status of Gulgong is not appreciated in PPR.

It is as if, in the rush to accommodate mining for the sake of it, the people themselves are just in the way. For example, the Report refers to commuter trains being mere concessions to humanity, slotted into the timetabling of coal trains. We are in the Hunter, constantly in fear that the commuter trains we rely on will be knocked out of the timetable altogether, rather than augmented as we need.

And we know mines don't bring local jobs; they take away local specialist workers from the towns instead, lowering the quality of life. The spin about bringing jobs (while hiding the downsides) is seen right through.

RATIONALE; ETHICS OF PROCEEDING.

The Preferred Project Report does not dwell on responses in the area of ethics and justification. I want this corrected. The number of responders wishing to 'save the earth' needs to be taken very seriously. *There is only one way to go for this Earth now, for us; and it is down. Governments must slow the crash, not speed it.*

***SMH: 21.10.2009, then leader of the Opposition Mr O'Farrell said: "the public service has become demoralised... we promise to introduce legislation governing ethics, integrity, performance and accountability, including a code of conduct similar to that in Victoria".*

That does not square with destroying our productive land, our small rivers, our heritage and communities, for trashy coal. (Nor with handing over the choicest parts of public Newcastle, its Rail especially, to developers!

Consider not proceeding with this low grade mine. Consider investing to encourage carefully inserted and locally compatible clean energy projects instead, each one as suited to its environment as possible.

Look in detail at the comparable ongoing cost benefit. Consider the continuation of the otherwise destroyed farms and communities, and the added employment and profits from say, the wind, solar and geothermal investments. Consider that these benefits would continue indefinitely, well past the end date of the mine.

So far we see here in the Hunter, little evidence of successful re-establishment of natural, productive farms and habitat on mine dumps. Only last month, three dairy farms fell apart; we all know about the wine zones dying, and the horse industries being threatened by encroaching mines and impacts. This is not OK.

Consider the future of the heritage rich town of Gulgong, its survival as such, being dependent on its economic success from tourism. No-one wants to holiday, paint, visit or research next to a coal mine. No-one.

A few days ago we saw on ABCTV a coverage of Carnegie College, Fife, Scotland. In a decade, following a time of concern after all the coalmine closures there, the entire industrial education and employment scene has restructured around production of wind turbines and other sustainable energy systems. Now, local people are more positive, educated and healthy, proud and confident than ever in the old fashioned coal age.

It makes me feel ashamed and embarrassed that Australia is so backward, that its only thought process is apparently “ have coal, have demand, buck to be made, so tick the Project”.

Is NSW really stupid enough to think “We can, therefore we should” ? The Report tries to push the idea.

Actually, not all we are able to do, and not everything that turns a buck, should be done. Is this news?

By the look of the Preferred Project Report, it is still an unknown concept. Government should test if a project is desirable; not merely check that it is economically viable over some short term for some entity or person.

NB, the spinoff cash sweeteners from mining towards green-tinged activities is mere window dressing.

Compare the triple bottom line: economic, social, environmental.

Everyone on the receiving end would prefer NO Cobbora coal mine. Government cannot ethically allow all of us, and future generations, to be outweighed by a profiteer. We expect better of Governments.

Governments should be deeply involved in demand reduction, ESD, and saving our planet. Some already are!

I have taken note of a fair bit of detail in the written Report. But my conclusion is more general:

I request that from here on, **true rationale, and ethics** regarding this unnecessary and backward Cobbora mine take precedence in the discussion.

Thankyou for the opportunity to comment.

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