

SUBMISSION

MOUNT THORLEY CONTINUATION - 2014

I wish to object to the proposed expansion of Mount Thorley Mine.

My concerns include ongoing impacts from noise, dust, visual and health.

The area of Bulga has been adversely affected by open-cut mining since 1981 with residents forced to endure those impacts, on the false understanding that the mine operations would cease after 30 years. To its horror the Community is now confronted with a further 21 years of mining activity. Should residents who have lived here before mining and since be expected to spend a lifetime (55 years) of intolerable impacts for the benefit of a foreign-owned company? Is there a social licence for this? There is no natural or manmade buffer, unlike Saddle Ridge at Warkworth mine, which can offer any degree of protection to the people of Bulga.

This mining application has been set for 21 years. The claim that the mining company needs additional time to complete mining in Loder's Pit cannot be justified. The reason given that Loder's Pit could not be accessed for four years because of flooding is a fabrication. Had the opportunity to discharge water at times of high river flow been taken then the bulk of the water could have been removed in a short period. The truth is that equipment was moved to Warkworth mine to maximise production there. In fact Loder's Pit was used as a storage for water pumped from Warkworth pits. Loder's Pit need not have been left in limbo for that period of time. To now seek an extension of time, with the extended period continuing to impact on the Bulga Community, is unacceptable. I believe that the approval of the insignificant Abbey Green South Pit was an interim measure to maintain mine production so as to avoid non-functioning penalties while Loder's Pit was dormant.

Fig. 2.7 indicates completion of Loder's Pit by Year 3. The recently approved Abbey Green North has a life of approximately two years. This means that coal production at MTO will cease in five years from now – 2019. Why then did MTO seek a 21 year timeframe with no coal production during the last 16 years, unless it is for the sole purpose of providing a super-sized dumping ground for WML. Shareholders in the parent company should be justifiably alarmed.

Fig. 2.10 shows the mining layout after 21 years with a large tailings storage dam near the corner of Putty Road and Charlton Road which appears not to have been rehabilitated and will generate airborne pollutants in the vicinity of Bulga for the life-of-mine and beyond. Rehabilitation will be carried out after completion of mining at MTO and will not take 16 years to complete.

A reasonably successful rehabilitation programme at the old overburden dump to the east of Loder's Pit is now being overshadowed by new dumps appearing in front of the rehabilitation zone. The short-lived visual relief for Bulga residents will now revert to barren stockpiles for the life-of-mine. DPE compliance officers advise that nothing can be done to mitigate the visual impact.

Areas of rehabilitated land in the vicinity of Abbey Green North will disappear and become a negative of total rehabilitation and a positive of disturbance area. Land with established final rehabilitation should not be destroyed simply because it becomes economically viable to excavate to a greater depth.

The MTO CPP is reaching the end of its useful life (34 Years) and the need for its replacement and continued operation to benefit WML operations (Item 2.4.7 p25) would be impractical and an uneconomic investment by MTO.

MTW invested substantial capital on fleet upgrades in anticipation of 2012 approval (Item 2.4.5 p22).

This foolish and costly mistake is indicative of their arrogant assumption that approval would automatically happen. Determination of this application should not be based on this expectation. MTO should be looking at closing down and immediately rehabilitating after coal production ceases, not reinvesting in long-term projects.

Final landform (Items 12.2.3 p170 & 12.5.2 p 176) mentions highwall and end wall features that will be retained. Their locations are not included in the accompanying maps. The existing highwall at the southern end of North Charlton Ridge (incorrectly referred to as Charlton Ridge in the EIS) was excavated in the 1980's and no effort has been made to rehabilitate the sheer cliff-face clearly visible from Putty Road. The company should at least be made to batter the cliff to a slope capable of holding suitable vegetation otherwise the unacceptable eyesore will remain for generations to come. The conclusion (Item 12.6 p 176) states that final landform will be consistent with surrounding landscape features. This will not happen. The original landform was a gentle slope from North Charlton Ridge to the Charlton Road area. The flatter final topography above the final void will trap rainwater for an unspecified time creating a "marshy water body". The rainfall run-off to Wollombi Brook that carries only 0.2ML per day 80% of the time at Bulga (p 210) will be deprived of the much needed run-off from the MTO property.

I request that you give serious consideration to the above comments.

Stewart Mitchell
29 The Inlet Road
Bulga NSW 2330
Phone: 02 65745152

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