



Ryde - Hunter's Hill Flora and Fauna Preservation Society

Member of Nature Conservation Council of N.S.W.

**P.O. Box 2127
Boronia Park 2111**

NSW Department of Planning and Environment
1 May 2018

RE: Ulan Coal mine 08_0184 Mod 4

Dear Sir/Madam,

We object strongly to the above proposal.

We find it offensive that four longwalls in the existing Ulan underground mine are to be extended by up to 600m beneath the Durrigere State Conservation Area (SCA), two longwalls lengthened by over 160m, and one longwall widened by approximately 31m. At adjoining operations it is proposed to lengthen two long walls by almost 400 metres. Further, two additional dewatering bores are proposed and an additional 3.6 ha of bushland will be disturbed some of which is in a State Conservation Area. All of this expansion is being proposed and yet with no plans to increase employment numbers.

We are a local conservation group established in 1966. We have a close association with the Field of Mars Reserve, East Ryde, a 50 hectare natural bushland remnant. Fifty years ago this bushland remnant was under threat from a proposal by Council to expand the small garbage tip area in the reserve.

Due to the Society and local community's efforts the Field of Mars Reserve is now a Wildlife Refuge and contains the award winning Field of Mars Environmental Education Centre visited by over 15,000 students each year. Natural bushland and the native fauna for which it provides habitat, such as at the Field of Mars Reserve, is under very significant threat from a rapidly changing climate. These effects are already being observed in the reserve with increased degradation of the saltmarsh remnants, increased weed invasion and more frequent flood events.

The Field of Mars Reserve has been identified as part of Sydney's Green Grid in the draft Greater Sydney Commission's plan for growing Sydney. This Green Grid will be the lungs for millions of residents in Sydney. It is critical that overall carbon emissions are reduced and the impacts of a changing climate on important natural bushland and waterways such as in the Field of Mars Reserve are mitigated so as to ensure that there is clean air and water for future generations.

The increase in carbon emissions, including fugitive emissions caused by the increased coal production and associated works poses significant environmental, social and economic threats far wider than just the natural ecosystems of the Field of Mars Reserve. This concerns our members greatly.

Despite assurances by the state government that The Drip would be protected in perpetuity this has not occurred. The popular tourist attraction The Drip remains under imminent threat from existing coal mining activity, which starves it of adequate water. That water which does reach it is increasingly polluted.

These existing threats will be exacerbated by this proposed underground mine expansion as it will further threaten the regional groundwater sources north of the gorge.

This proposal intercepts more groundwater and surface water flows from the Goulburn River. The current rate of extraction is unsustainable and it is unclear how further extraction can be justified given the degradation of water systems currently occurring.

The cumulative impact of previous mine approvals, and their subsequent expansion, on the health of the Goulburn River has not been properly assessed. This proposal further contributes to the degradation of the Goulburn River and is in the absence of any independent regional water study.

We are very concerned that mining has crossed the Great Dividing Range and how the interception of ground water west of the Divide will impact from the Murray Darling Basin. Sections of the Murray-Darling river system are already dried up and communities are losing their access to fresh water for domestic and stock use. It seems ludicrous that a mine east of the divide is able to have such far ranging and unfair impacts on communities which derive no benefit from the mining activity.

The protection of sensitive ecosystems in State Conservation Areas must be protected for future generations. The Durrigere State Conservation Area protects a patch of rainforest vine thicket and gully complex of special significance. Its woodlands are important habitat for many threatened bird species, with records of little eagle, glossy black-cockatoo, little lorikeet, turquoise parrot, barking owl, powerful owl, brown treecreeper, speckled warbler, painted honeyeater, grey-crowned babbler, varied sittella and diamond firetail in the area.

Its gullies and rocky outcrops provide refuge for threatened mammals including squirrel gliders, yellow-bellied sheath-tail-bat, large-eared pied bat, eastern bentwing-bat, Corben's long-eared bat and eastern cave bat.

The rate of biodiversity loss is significant across NSW and it is totally unacceptable that an area set aside for protection of the State's native flora and fauna is now under threat from a rapacious, polluting and thirsty industry such as coal mining.

We urge that this further modification to the Ulan mine approval be rejected outright.

Yours sincerely

Cathy Merchant
RHHFFPS Vice President