

## **Submission : Bylong Coal Project: SSD 14 6367**

It is amazing that this proposal is even considered !

In a State where:                      46 mines are operating  
  
    55 are in Care and Maintenance      and  
  
    55 are abandoned

It is plain there is no pressing need to destroy arable land and threaten future water security by approving a project involving two new open-cut coal mines and one underground.

The mine footprint will disturb 2,875 ha of land including 440 ha of Bioregional Significant Agricultural Land (BSAL), 260 ha being destroyed in open cut, plus 700 ha of mapped Critical Equine Industry Cluster land.

The proposal to replace BSAL at another location is untested and high risk.

Impacts on groundwater and surface water will be significant. The highly connected alluvial aquifer system within the stressed Bylong River catchment will have predicted peak losses of up to 295 million litres per year (ML/yr). Loss of base flows to the Bylong River is predicted to be 918 ML/yr. The mine proposes to use up to 1,942 ML/yr which is over 75% of the annual rainfall recharge. The river system is over allocated and local farmers will lose important water supply. This can be expected to impact upon food production.

Australia is an island at risk of being cut off from the rest of the world by either political or environmental catastrophe. In such a situation conservation of food and water security is paramount. To risk this security to mine a resource simply to allow a Korean Company to “cut out the middle-man” is economic madness coupled with environmental vandalism !

The Hunter Valley is a stark example of where the sacrifice of land and people to the interests of multinational mining companies can lead. Whilst the fight to contain mining activities in The Hunter is current, to consider repeating the failed experiment in the Bylong Valley is absolute insanity.

### **Special edition 1, 2014 International Journal of Rural Law and Policy Mining in a sustainable world Conclusion**

From the 1990s to the present, the Hunter Valley has become increasingly economically dependent upon the operations of open-cut coal mining. Some existing rural enterprises such as dairy farms, cattle runs and vineyards, which are essential to the food supply and a balanced, diverse and sustainable regional economy, have been displaced as open-cut mining sites have been established and extended. Evidence of the social and ecological toll of open-cut coal mining in the Hunter Valley suggests that **these costs must be more heavily weighed against the limited economic benefits the industry brings to the Hunter region.**

The world is turning away from coal.

The advancement of renewable energy capacity worldwide has been spectacular.

To take China (the acknowledged driver of the recent coal boom) as an example:

### **CHINA the source of the Coal Boom**

Figures from China's National Energy Administration in October of 2014, reveal that China's coal use dropped by 1.28% in 2014.

However, in March 2015 new data from the National Bureau of Statistics of China indicates that coal consumption dropped by 2.9%.

China's consumption of electricity from coal-fired power stations fell 10 per cent over the first three months of the year. These figures are "very bad news" for Australian coal exporters, as it signalled Chinese demand would continue to decline. China's coal imports fell 42 per cent over the first quarter of the year, compared with the same time last year, according to Customs Bureau figures released on April 13.

This is partly a function of Beijing's recently declared "war on pollution" but also overproduction across the Chinese coal sector.

While coal used in the power generation saw a sharp drop in the first quarter, the use of renewables rose sharply

Further; the harmful effects of coal on health and climate change are now well-known and well-documented.

The prestigious medical journal "The Lancet" has published a two volume review involving more than 40 key researchers from all over the world:

### ***Lancet* and University College London Institute for Global Health Commission**

#### **Managing the health effects of (493 references) climate change Two volumes**

**Achieving a decarbonised global economy and securing the public health benefits it offers is no longer primarily a technical or economic question—it is now a political one**

The Lancet made the point that:

One important strategy to protect against the health burdens of local and national energy choices, is to ensure that health impact assessments are built in to the planning, costing, and approval phases of a new project. By developing the tools and capacity to enforce this, policy makers can better understand the broader consequences of their decisions.

**Lancet**

G7 nations are in agreement and even the Pope has pleaded for a re-assessment of world view.

In the Hunter Valley alone health costs related to coal are enormous (over \$600m per annum):

## Coal and health in the Hunter: Lessons from one valley for the world (248 references)

### Recommendations for Action

#### 1. The prohibition of any new coal projects in the Hunter Valley

**Table 1. The local health costs of coal in the Hunter Valley**

Source of health damage	Value of health costs
Externalised health costs associated with pollution from five coal fired electricity generators in the Hunter Valley	\$600 million per annum
Health costs among people living in Singleton associated with fine particle pollution (PM2.5) from coal sources (coal mines and coal fired power stations) in Singleton	\$47 million per annum
Health costs among people living in Muswellbrook associated with fine particle pollution (PM2.5) from coal sources (coal mines and coal fired power stations) in Muswellbrook	\$18.3 million per annum
Health costs among people living in Newcastle associated with air pollution (PM10) from coal sources in Newcastle	\$13 million per annum

**Table 2. Social costs of carbon associated with Hunter Valley coal**

Estimates of the social costs of carbon (SCC)	Current production volume of Hunter Valley coal	Social cost of carbon associated with Hunter Valley coal
\$37-190/tonne CO <sub>2</sub> e	145 million tonnes per annum	\$16-66 billion per annum

The “lesson” for Bylong Valley is starkly illustrated in this well-referenced document.

The age of coal is rapidly ending. Coal is clearly shown not to be “Good for Humanity” nor a “moral imperative” for Australia to supply developing nations with coal for energy. The truth is that those nations will “leapfrog” coal-fired generators and poles and wires and adopt cheaper and healthier renewable energy generation. This has proven to be the case with fixed telephone wires and mobile technology in developing nations.

If Australia is not to be left floundering in the wake of more progressive nations we need to take action now and look forward to a renewables future and drop the addiction to coal.

Cristiana Figueres, UN climate change spokesperson, has expressed amazement that Australia “the sunniest, windiest country on earth” is so slow in renewables uptake.

As The Lancet stated “it is not a technical or economic consideration it is a political one”

The addiction of successive governments to the future of coal and the NSW DPE’s eagerness to push for coal developments is now being shown as folly; a folly that should not be projected into the future.

Price and demand for coal is falling and despite the optimistic predictions of the industry and the Minerals Council, this is not going to change for all of the reasons outlined above, there will **never** be a bounce back in coal price or demand.

There is hope for Australia and The Hunter if we follow the lead of other nations and embrace renewables as a business opportunity. The Hunter hosts CSIRO’s Energy Centre with world-leading technologies in development. I enclose information from CSIRO as follows:

**“Delivering solar breakthroughs through collaboration” (CSIRO ENERGY)**

We have been developing advanced solar storage to provide solar electricity at any time, day or night through a \$5.68 million research program supported by the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) and a broader collaboration with Abengoa Solar, the largest supplier of solar thermal electricity in the world.

The breakthrough was made at the CSIRO Energy Centre, Newcastle, home to Australia’s low emission and renewable energy research. The Centre includes two solar thermal test plants featuring more than 600 mirrors (heliostats) directed at two towers housing solar receivers and turbines.”

There are thousands of jobs in developing and manufacturing renewables as other nations have found.

This is NOT a time to give “carte blanche” to a project that envisions more coal, more harmful emissions and more emphasis on the pockets of developers rather than the health and welfare of a nation.

Moreover it is time to recognise that coal exports are simply that!  
The coal and the profits are exported!

A few jobs and minimal royalties is the net benefit to NSW. It is a fact that Kepco gets the base product free of charge and then reap the benefits of government subsidies and will export the profits.

The “Balance of Trade” argument is spurious when the benefits of that balance do not stay in Australia.

The area in the Bylong Valley proposed for desecration and destruction has Aboriginal cultural heritage significance: 239 sites were recorded in the study area with 25 regarded as being of high local or regional significance (including an ochre quarry, grinding grooves and rock shelters); 144 sites have been identified at risk from mine impacts with 102 in the open cut area.

There is also important European heritage, including the Catholic Church Cemetery, Upper Bylong Public School and a number of historic homesteads and farm buildings will be destroyed in the open cut.

Social impacts are always dismissed, those on the Bylong community have already been devastating.

Loss of the home and lifestyle you have chosen, to make way for a destructive alternative that is dangerous to health and to climate is a source of almost unendurable pain.

The recent suicide of a Queensland farmer in the face of CSG mining attests to that fact!

It is also time to ask:

*“Why is it that every time a PAC puts forward sensible conditions for approval it is the DoPE that rushes to negate those conditions and acts as the proponent’s apologist?”*

This has happened time and again in recent proposals.

At best; it smacks of gross incompetence.

At worst; of collusion and corruption.

These issues deserve serious consideration.

The people of NSW look to The PAC to be the true and honest arbitrator in Planning.

The Bylong Development Proposal is not in the best interests of this area or this State and should be rejected.



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