

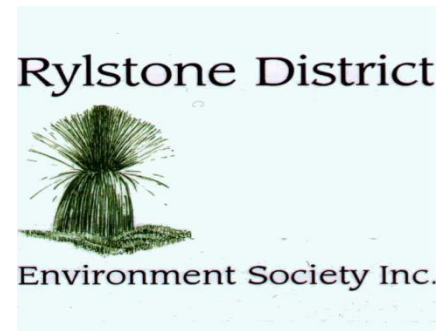
Rylstone District Environment Society Inc.

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Mr Stephen O'Donoghue
NSW Department of Planning and Environment
23-33 Bridge Street
Sydney NSW 2000
3 November 2015

Dear Mr O'Donoghue,

Re: Submission in regard to Bylong Coal Project: Application SSD 14_6367

Rylstone District Environment Society opposes the development of the Bylong Coal Project.

Our reasons are as follows:

- Impacts on groundwater and surface water will be unsustainable. The river system is over-allocated and local farmers will lose important water supply. Consideration needs to be given to water allocations and availability during drought conditions. 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 are 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 mine disturbance area has high biodiversity values that will not be mitigated through the proposed offset arrangements. Nationally endangered species recorded in the area include the brush-tailed rock wallaby, New Holland mouse, regent honeyeater and spotted-tailed quoll. Three entirely new plant species have been recorded. A significant area of critically endangered Grassy Box Gum Woodland will be destroyed, along with habitat for 17 threatened birds and 7 threatened plants.
- A significant area of prime agricultural land will be destroyed: the mine footprint will disturb 2875 hectares (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.

- The area has Aboriginal cultural heritage significance which needs to be protected. 239 sites have been recorded in the 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 – 102 within the open cut area. These sites should be preserved and protected from development.
- While many existing coal mines in the Hunter Valley are for sale and the price of coal is low compared to prices during the recent boom, it does not make sense to develop a new mine on a greenfield site.
- The road through the valley has great scenic value and has been named one of the top ten tourism drives in Australia. The local economy needs visitors and tourism and will increasingly depend on this in future. An open-cut coal mine will have a devastating visual impact on the Bylong Valley and will generate dust and noise – impacts that are not compatible with developing sustainable tourism and encouraging visitors to the area.

Yours sincerely,

Dr R. J. (Buzz) Sanderson

President, Rylstone District Environment Society (RDES)

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