

## Bylong Valley

Submission to the Environmental Assessment Impact Statement against coal mining in the Bylong Valley.

### 1. Endangered species will be affected and their habitat destroyed.

Australia is already responsible for the decline or extinction of over 200 species of native animals/birds as a direct result of habitat destruction, unsafe mining practices, degradation of suitable habitat and ignorance about consequences of unsuitable farming practices, pollution of air quality and introduction of feral animals which leads to habitat destruction, over a 200 year period.

There is adequate information available on threatened species which will be affected by destruction of habitat as a result of the introduction of another huge open cut coal mine. "The mine disturbance area has very 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 were 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". The species which will be affected, can also have a flow-on effect due to their natural feeding and breeding habits. As is well known, the loss of a particular species is for all time. Regardless of whether there are other populations at another location, the species endemic to a certain area provide a window into their uniqueness. Australia is bound, and a signatory to conventions which prevent the destruction or interference with a species and also migratory bird populations.

### 2. Air pollution is another great concern which will increase as the coal mine expands.

The fall-out from pollution can cause all manner of health concerns to the local resident populations. It not only affects the air they breathe but can also lead to life threatening asthma in the young. This is a debilitating and emotive illness which can have negative health impact for a lifetime. The cost to the local community in lost man hours, medications, visits to doctors, family dysfunction (where a little one has to go to hospital for unexpected asthma attacks, often in the middle of the night) and the monetary cost is quite large. That is one illness which can affect young people. And, people who develop asthma can die.

### 3. Impact on human populations and human health.

There are others i.e. stress and anxiety which will affect families as their position in the community is impacted by either the coal mine extracting in their backyard or "over the fence" in their neighbours backyard.

Then there is the problem of displaced persons, who are being forcibly relocated to another area, which can have huge negative impacts on their families and extended support systems.

There will be increase in coal trucks, noise from traffic, traffic congestion, road repairs, dust and fumes from diesel engines.

This will in turn increase anxiety and disease in these populations. There is already a strong media interest in the epidemic of farmers suiciding, this will increase.

#### 4. This valley is a food producer and Race horse producer.

Food production depends on a clean environment, clean water and sunshine, rainfall and temperature among other factors. Air pollution will increase as coal and dust particles are borne aloft by the wind, and carried over and deposited onto pristine land used for food production. This in turn will threaten the viability of the plant material as they will be unable to produce chlorophyll, which in turn produces strong and vigorous leaf growth, thereby reducing output and creating weak and unhealthy plants and reduced produce.

Farmers rely on Water irrigation from the rivers and backup aquifer groundwater. Water which is polluted and not available as the allocation has gone to coal mines will determine whether or not there are adequate resources allocated for the production of food stocks. As stated "the farmers will lose critical water supply" There can only be a negative outcome for the farmers if the coal mine goes ahead. The coal mine has the capacity to extract water at a far greater rate than the little farmer who uses it for crop irrigation. How will this extraction be governed adequately?

The valley was identified as having low air pollution, optimal landscape, vegetation and weather conditions for producing fine race horses.

Tarwyn Park is a showcase piece of real estate for producing race horses. Australian Story has already showcased the importance of managing the landscape for Australian conditions. This being, Australia is a dry climate and European farming techniques are not conducive to our leached and depleted soils. This real estate is producing the finest race horses and the owner Peter..... will be affected by the lowered water table, air pollution and noise from such a huge operation.

The microclimate of the recreated swampland will be affected , again, by the lowered watertable. This in turn will decrease the carrying capacity of the land, the health of the land and the ability to produce income for the owner. Insects are a pretty good bio-indicator of the health of the environment and, these too will decline because of the above reasons.

#### 5. Water Pollution and over extraction of Ground Water.

The environment does have the right to a share of the natural water resources to maintain health and biodiversity. This report does not incorporate a share of the water resources for the environment. Environmentalists and scientists have all recognised the right of nature in an Environmental Impact Assessments. This needs to be rectified.

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Water which is polluted with coal dust cannot be cleaned and redirected back in to the rivers and the environment. This has been the case in a number of countries overseas where their environment has been degraded for the next 50 years or more because of coal dust and the unlikelihood of the regeneration project actually succeeding adequately (more to the point with no regeneration at all). These communities .i.e. the Ok Tedi, have been left with an environment which is devoid of all plant, insect and animal life with no way to provide for their families and a very

uncertain future. Their river has been destroyed along the banks with coal sludge and the water is polluted as these members stated there are no fish to feed their families. The general scientific consensus states that an area of at least 50 meters wide on each bank needs to be maintained as pristine habitat to ensure the health of the river system. This creates a buffer zone (corridor) for the macro invertebrates, in the water, and provides habitat to in effect, filtrate any pollutants which may enter the water zone. There would be no such buffer zone where a coal mine is situated. The coal mine would in effect damage all vegetation in the zone, all rivers would be damaged to enable extraction of the coal. It will be quite impossible to restore the area to what it once was.

There needs to be a study on the macro-invertebrates and the health of the river system in general, prior to the coal mine being given the go ahead. Bearing in mind the impact on communities further downstream.

Extraction from our aquifers will depend on the seasonal variations in the rainfall. The percentages are not realistic as no-one can forecast the variations in rainfall or drought. The aquifers do not recharge on a seasonal basis as the rainfall will inevitably change due to climate change and the profound impact on the environment in all parts of the world.

I believe this is an overinflated figure with no correlation to actual events and cannot be relied upon with any accuracy. Therefore, these percentages cannot be used.

#### 6. Tourist destination.

As has been stated on their website, Bylong Valley is a tourist destination because of the beauty of the surrounding district. A huge coal mine will impact this as I for one do not want to see a huge dirty hole in the ground where once was natural beauty. I would bypass this as a destination for another good reason and that is the air pollution created by extraction of coal. It is detrimental to my health and I would avoid it at all costs.

The town will lose out on tourist dollars as well as the opportunity to showcase Tarwyn Park and all the groundbreaking work and knowledge which is being imparted to other farmers.

7. "The area 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 within the open cut area". The destruction of Aboriginal Heritage Cultural Sites is not acceptable. These are to be maintained at all costs. They are not to be interfered with in any way, or disrespected. We, as Australians value the heritage and culture of our original inhabitants and wish to maintain the area in an undisturbed state.

#### 8. The future of coal mining.

In short: There is a push for renewable energies around the world away from dirty polluting coal fired power stations and facilities which use coal as their primary fuel.

Investors are diversifying away from investments in companies who support the coal industries.

This means that the coal industry is a dying industry and as it contributes to climate change globally, more and more people will not accept that this is the way forward.

The future will be other forms of energy i.e. Solar which can be harnessed for free and does not destroy the environment or leave a planet which is uninhabitable.

Yours sincerely

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