

Submission

Bylong Coal Project: SSD 14_6367

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Background:

Korean power company, Kepco, is proposing to mine 6.5 million tonnes of coal per year (Mtpa) over 25 years from 2 open cut pits (8 yrs) and an underground mine in the highly fertile Bylong Valley, NSW.

I object to this proposal due to impacts on human health and raise the following objections:

1. The Bylong mine will have direct impacts on the environmental determinants of health: clean air, clean water, a safe food supply, and a stable climate.
2. Open cut coal mines create high levels of air pollutants including coarse and fine particulates, known to have short and long term health impacts (increased cardiac and respiratory disease, increased lung cancer rates)
3. The predicted long-term impacts on prime agricultural land and water systems in the Bylong Valley are unacceptable and will not be mitigated through proposed offsets and rehabilitation. Water supply and quality will be threatened.
4. The renowned Tarwyn Park natural sequence farming processes will be destroyed. Sustainable primary industry and agricultural production will be replaced by infertile, contaminated land, with no prospects of rehabilitation after the mine is exhausted.
5. A significant area of prime agricultural land will be destroyed: 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.
6. 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.
7. Human health is dependent on healthy ecosystems and biodiversity. 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.

8. 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 in the open cut area.
9. 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. The social impacts on the Bylong community have already been devastating. Social and mental health impacts are linked to higher rates of physical illness.
10. When mined and burned for electricity the coal from Bylong valley will contribute to anthropogenic global warming and climate change. Climate change is now a health crisis. 400,000 die each year globally already at less than one degree of warming, and many millions suffer severely. Extreme weather events, droughts, floods, inundation, food and water insecurity and changing patterns of food borne and vector borne disease are some of the ways climate change is affecting human health right now. The only safe place for coal is in the ground. When the full cost of externalities of health and environmental damage are taken into account coal is not the cheapest source of electricity, but one of the most expensive.

This mine should not go ahead for all these reasons. Let the farmers keep farming Bylong and looking after the health of the valley, and thus the health of the local and global community.

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