



ORANGE FIELD NATURALIST & CONSERVATION SOCIETY

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A submission on the Bylong Coal Project

NSW Department of Planning & Environment

majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au/index.pl?action=view_job&job_id=6367

Our objections to the proposal are:

The land beneath which the proposed mining project is to take place is that of the highly fertile Bylong Valley. Mining cannot occur without impacting significantly on the prime agricultural land and water systems on the area.

This is unacceptable, and any suggestion that mitigation could occur through offsets and rehabilitation is nonsense.

Part of the area in question is the renowned Tarwyn Park natural sequences farming system. Mining in the area will result in its destruction.

The proposed mine footprint will result in the disturbance and destruction of 2,875 ha of land including 440 ha of Bioregional Significant Agricultural Land (BSAL), 260 ha being destroyed in open cut, plus 700ha of mapped Critical Equine Industry Cluster land. The proposal to replace BSAL to another location is untested and high risk.

Current demand for water in the Bylong Valley through groundwater extraction and that of extraction from the Bylong River is currently over-allocated. The impact of the mine would place unrealistic pressure on an already overstressed water resource.

It is estimated the presence of a mine of the proposed magnitude would result in peak losses of up to 295 MLs per year. Loss of base flows to the Bylong River is predicted to be 915 MLs per year. In addition, the mine proposes to use 1,942 MLs per year, which is 75% of annual rainfall recharge.

The area proposed for the mine is one of high biodiversity value. The effects of mining on the species living in the disturbance area will not be mitigated through the proposed offset arrangements.

There have been recorded within the area nationally endangered species such as the Brush Tailed Rock Wallaby, New Holland Mouse, Regent Honeyeater and Spotted Tail Quoll. In addition, the presence of three entirely new plant species has been recorded.

Of great concern also, is the fact that a significant area of Grassy Box Gum Woodland will be destroyed, along with habitat for 17 threatened birds and 7 threatened plants.

The establishment of a coalmine in the area desired by KEPCO will place at risk significant examples of aboriginal cultural heritage. There have been 239 sites of aboriginal heritage significance recorded in the study area, with 25 being regarded as having high local and regional significance (including an ochre quarry, grinding grooves and rock shelters). 144 of these sites are identified as being at risk from the impact of the proposed mine, including 102 in the open cut area,.

There are also European Heritage sites which will be significantly affected by the proposed establishment of a mine in the site in question. Such at risk European heritage sites include the local Catholic Church cemetery, Upper Bylong Public School and a number of historic homesteads and farm buildings. These will be destroyed if the project is permitted to proceed.

The social impact of the proposed mine already has had devastating consequences. The community has been placed under threat because of social division concerning those who stand to benefit and those who do not.

People's lifestyles have been placed under threat from the imposition of an industry which was not sought by them and over which they have no control or input in the decisions that are being made that will drastically affect their lives.

Finally, it does not make sense to establish a new coal mine in the current environmental and economic climate. Coal represents yesterday's technology which is no longer morally, economically or environmentally justifiable. The future of our planet relies on those whose responsibility it is to make decisions about such issues as coal mines to do their duty to present and future generations through ensuring that no new coal mines will be permitted.

On behalf of the Orange Field Naturalist & Conservation Society,

John Austin, President