

OBJECTIONS TO KEPSCO BYLONG VALLEY COAL MINE

This mine should not be allowed to proceed. The NSW Government is unable to properly regulate this or any other mines.

1. 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. The renowned Tarwyn Park natural sequence farming processes will be destroyed.
2. A significant area of prime agricultural land will be destroyed: the mine footprint will disturb 2,875 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.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.

7. Australia's food security is at risk. Example should be drawn from recent experience at Maules Creek NSW, at far NE tip of Liverpool Plains, where 3 coal mines - Tarrawonga, Boggabri and Maules Creek - have led to the acquisition of 66 farm properties by coal mines, and the consequent flight of rural families from the area. Grain and beef sales from the area are dramatically reduced since this phenomenon. The pristine Bylong Valley has some of NSW's best agricultural land and has historically hosted beef, dairy and crop farming and horse breeding. Today it is predominantly beef cattle and lucerne hay production, with some crops.
8. Thoroughbred horse industry local to the area is a sustainable industry, that will be destroyed permanently by coal mining damaging water, pasture and air quality. The valley has a long and proud thoroughbred breeding history. Since the 1850s it has bred thoroughbred horses, including racing champions and 'Walers' which carried the WW1 Light Horse Brigades.
9. Landscape values of the Bylong Valley are simply outstanding, and will be destroyed forever. The Bylong Valley's beauty is renowned and it is a National Trust listed Landscape Conservation Area (2013), based on its 'prime agricultural land with a rural landscape of exceptional scenic value'. The National Trust also notes the major scientific significance of the area, stemming from implementation of Peter Andrews' Natural Sequence Farming on the internationally renowned 'Tarwyn Park'.
10. Tourism should be encouraged, not destroyed by coal mining. A few years ago the Bylong Valley Way was sealed, creating a major link between the Hunter and Central West. It is now regarded as one of Australia's Top 10 drives and is extremely popular with both drivers and motorbike riders.
11. The NSW should admit it - it does not have the ability to properly regulate this mine. Experience from Maules Creek and Boggabri coal mines, for example, demonstrate that the culture within coal mines is to understate the impacts during the planning phase, then to apply for modifications of approval when the predictions do not work out.
12. The Environmental Consultants Hansen Bailey have been seriously discredited elsewhere, and their environmental predictions in the KEPCO EA should be viewed with extreme caution. At Maules Creek, for example, EA by Hansen Bailey is found to have erred in its predictions of noise (the contours now appear to be several kilometres out from those predicted), the biodiversity offset strategy is now proven to be very inaccurate and the wildlife audits severely lacking in species and distribution, and the dust predictions are also now discredited, with impacts on the health and well-being of a 20 kilometre affectation zone.
13. Traffic dangers will now be exacerbated, with heavy traffic for construction and servicing of the mines, and transportation of materials. A infant can see how the existing Castlereagh Highway and associated roads cannot cope with the problems posed by this proposed mine.