

Dear Commission Members

I strongly oppose any plans for coal mining in the Bylong Valley.

Approval for mining near a national park (Wollemi National Park) area should be closely scrutinised given that there are endangered mammals and plants, including the critically endangered Grassy Box Gum. The impacts from noise, coal dust and lights 24 hours a day will impact the adjoining Wollemi NP.

The Department of Planning and Environment approval should take into account the adverse impacts of subsidence. Whether underground or open cut, subsidence occurs from coal extraction and the resultant overburden (the earth removed to extract the coal) can lower surrounding groundwater tables to the detriment of surrounding landscapes and communities. Approval should take into account system springs and fault lines and the impact of subsidence upon them. Subsidence can induce fracturing and affect leakage rates to productive aquifers and thus surrounding communities. It can also reduce surface water flows and quality with the same result. The overburden produces acidity and salinity in surrounding water systems which poses a very real threat of contamination downstream. The discharged water from the mine contaminates waterways, impacting on the agribusinesses in the area.

Coal mining uses vast quantities of water to wash the coal (separating it from other minerals or rock present), for drilling, dust suppression and mining communities. On average, each tonne of coal requires 200 litres of water ([http://www.csr.m.uq.edu.au/docs/MCA\\_SOTA.pdf](http://www.csr.m.uq.edu.au/docs/MCA_SOTA.pdf)). A mine producing 5 million tonnes per annum will use a gigalitre (1,000,000,000) of water. Coal mining water is sourced from bore fields, rivers and dams in direct competition with a sustainable but vulnerable agriculture sector and the towns and communities around it. The economic benefits are negligible as they are only temporary, whereas farming and tourism are on-going and the benefits are directly felt by those communities.

The cost of rehabilitation has traditionally been greater than the security deposit placed on it. According to the Audit Office of Queensland, "the financial assurance held is often insufficient to cover the estimated cost of rehabilitation and is rarely enforced".

In this environment, it is difficult to believe Kepco's promise to the community not to violate the integrity of the floodplains along Lee Creek when two open cut mines will straddle them. Mining plans change as they develop, and it would make sense to Kepco to close the gap between the mines by mining the floodplains and Lee Creek. By that stage, there will be no water left to preserve there.

Additionally, the transportation of coal and resultant exposure of coal dust along the routes that it travels has impacts on many communities. The World Health Organisation (WHO) concluded that coal dust contributes to a range of diseases and health problems including respiratory illness, cardiovascular diseases and lung cancer. Particles penetrate the lungs and are difficult for the body to expel. Over time they accumulate and do more damage. WHO stated that there is no safe level of exposure to coal dust. Studies have found that coal dust exposure increased exposure to semi-volatile compounds like polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons which have been linked to cardiopulmonary and respiratory disease (<http://www.atmospolres.com/articles/volume5/issue2/apr-14-040.pdf>).

This additional mine would increase coal traffic, thus health risks, significantly on the existing line. Even without it an extra mine, the coal freight carried on that line seemed overstretched and I noticed long delays for returning trains to pass during my time in the Bylong Valley.

The area has had 239 Aboriginal culturally significant sites identified with over half of this at risk from mining activities and a shocking 102 within the proposed open cut area. The Bylong Valley is a highly significant valley surrounded by sandstone cliff formations, and home to Tarwyn Park, which should be preserved as the home of Natural Sequence Farming by Peter Andrews and continued by his son.

I would suggest that the economic benefits of tourism and agriculture are sustainable industries and would support the NSW economy over a longer period of time and without the harmful long-term effects of the coalmines.

Please do not approve Kepco's application for a coalmine in this stunning and historic valley.

Yours sincerely,

Claudia Caton