



ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF BATHURST PARISH OF RYLSTONE-KANDOS

Priest
Secretary
Treasurer
ABN

Rev'd Leigh Gardiner
Margaret Squire
Mary Wainwright
834 214 922 08

PO Box 2
RYLSTONE NSW 2849
Telephone 02 63791049
wollemianglican@bigpond.com

6/11/2015

NSW Planning and Environment

Dear Sir/Madam

**Re Kepco's Bylong Coal Project.
Application SSD 14_6367**

I write concerning an incorrect statement on the EIS, Appendix T, Historic Heritage Impact Assessment with regard to St Stephen's Anglican Church and Cemetery (pp37,38).

The EIS states that "The church is not currently in use." (8.4.2)

This is incorrect. In most rural villages church services are no longer held weekly but either monthly or periodically through the year. St Stephen's used to have monthly services but is now generally having 3-4 services per year, plus burials. The community who remain are very passionate about St Stephen's and take good care of it. They look after the grounds very well.

My first concern therefore is that the statement is incorrect. Kepco have not been in touch with this Parish office, or the Diocesan office to ask. I wonder if Kepco have based this information on the statement of Tony Dunn (pg 24). However, if Kepco had asked any of the other 3 people featured in the 'stories', they would all have said that the church is active because each of them have been to services there recently. Indeed Anne Andrews is the main caretaker of St Stephen's. Incidentally even some of Kepco's own staff have been to a service, so their research is poor. And while this may be a minor point in such a significant enterprise, it leads me to question the level of research in other areas and I am particularly concerned about their degree of community consultation.

This incorrect statement then has an impact on the Significance Assessment. It is not a museum, it is a place of worship and offers both a time and place for community to draw together.

The Kepco Bylong Project has already had significant impacts on the social structure of the Bylong community as seen in the reduction of the population due to landowners being bought out by Kepco. This has resulted in the closure of the school and has certainly impacted the number of those attending services at St Stephen's. St Stephen's is reliant on

the local community and should this project go ahead, I believe it jeopardises the viability of St Stephen's remaining open. We used to have a service in conjunction with the Mouse Races but, as is noted elsewhere, the Mouse Races ceased in recent years due to the impact of people being bought out and moving out of the area.

I would also note my concern about the exhumation of graves from the Catholic Church at Upper Bylong. It was only earlier this week that I was contacted by a representative of Kepco, Archeologist Ted Higginbotham, about the possibility of receiving one or more of the exhumed remains at St Stephen's.

A further concern is that St Stephen's itself may be in jeopardy in the future as it is within Exploration Licence Areas.

Finally, as I offer Pastoral Care to the Bylong Community, I express my deepest concern for the mental health of the remaining community. The impact of this project on the wellbeing of community members has been enormous and I have been very worried about some of them. It is unfair and unjust to put people through what they have been through. Some of the dealings of Kepco with some of the community have been extremely poor.

I have also been aware of the stress impacting relationships and friendships which were long-lasting, good and strong relationships prior to this project being proposed. Such is the enormity of the impact this project has already had.

Kind regards,

Rev'd Leigh Gardiner
Priest-in-Charge
Rylstone-Kandos Anglican Parish