

48 Mudgee Street
Rylstone NSW
2849

5 November 2015

NSW Government
Department of Planning and Environment
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Sir/Madam

**Submission regarding the Proposed Bylong Coal Project
Application No. SSD 14_6367**

I wish to object to the proposed Bylong Coal Project on the following grounds:

1 Impact on Prime Agricultural Land

The predicted long-term impacts of the KEPCO coal mine on prime agricultural land are totally unacceptable.

The Bylong Valley is prime agricultural land, producing beef cattle, lucerne hay and some crops. Australia does not have a large amount of prime agricultural land and any that it does have should be preserved for agriculture, as the production of quality food will become increasingly important.

If the KEPCO Coal Mine is given permission to go ahead, a large area of prime agricultural land will be destroyed: the mine footprint will destroy 2875 hectares, including 440 hectares of Bioregional Significant Agricultural Land. It makes no sense to destroy such land when there are large areas of less productive land in NSW with coal deposits that are not being mined.

According to Fiona Simson, former president of NSW Farmers Association, 'this particular project will have significant impacts on the surface area of the land through disturbance and subsidence, significant impacts on the highly productive groundwater systems there' and 'significant impacts on the fragmentation of agricultural land use' (ABC News, 'Mine gateway panel opens door for first Bylong Valley coal mine', 24.4.2014).

Peter Stevens, School of Environmental and Life Sciences at the University of Newcastle, has said that the Bylong Valley should not be mined. 'It's folly to mine the Bylong Valley given that the long-term prospects for that area to provide for human sustenance are far greater than anything that can be gained by a mine' (Ibid).

2 Impact on groundwater and surface water

The predicted long-term impacts of the project on water systems in the Bylong Valley are also totally unacceptable.

The KEPCO mine proposes to use up to 1942 million litres a year, which is over 75% of the annual rainfall recharge. According to the NSW Mine Gateway Panel (April 2014) the KEPCO mine 'would have significant impacts on highly productive alluvial groundwater for decades' (Newcastle Herald, 24.7.2015). Peak losses of up to 295 million litres a year have been predicted as well as loss of base flows to the Bylong River of 918 million litres a year. This huge usage of water by the mine will have a gravely detrimental impact on the water available to farmers in the valley.

3 Impact on high biodiversity values

The mine disturbance area has exceptionally high biodiversity values. The proposed offset arrangements will not be able to compensate for the destruction of habitat for the great variety of flora and fauna, including endangered and threatened species, that currently inhabit the area.

Nationally endangered species that have been recorded in the Bylong Valley, include the Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby, the Spotted-tailed Quoll, the New Holland Mouse and the Regent Honeyeater.

If the mine were to be approved, a significant area of critically endangered Grassy Box Woodland would be destroyed along with habitat for 17 threatened birds and 7 threatened plants.

4 Impact on Aboriginal and European cultural heritage

The study area recorded 239 sites of Aboriginal cultural heritage significance in the area with 25 being regarded as of high or regional significance. The mine will have an impact on 144 of these sites, with 102 sites affected in the open cut area.

There are also sites of European cultural significance that would be destroyed by the open cut mine if it went ahead including a number of historic homesteads, the Upper Bylong Public School and the Catholic Church Cemetery.

5 Social impacts

The social impacts on the community in the Bylong Valley have already been devastating. Should the mine be approved, the effect on the community will be hugely damaging.