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Department of Planning & Infrastructure
23-33 Bridge Street, Sydney NSW 2000
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Re Bulga Optimisation Project Application No: SSD-4960

The following is our submission against the approval for the extension of the Bulga mine:

Noise. The report states that the noise and visual bund will provide protection for the residents of Bulga from the noise of the open cut activities. The current operations for the open cut mine has a max 35dBA and that the new proposal is going deeper and progressing toward the east away from Broke and Bulga. The building of the bund is supposed to protect the residents and yet it appears the bund is the one that will produce noise in excess of current levels and with other surrounding mines it is likely to be difficult to monitor or enforce compliance.

Generally the report states that this will only be a problem until year 3, but in figures 5.17 through to 5.18 there seems to be little change. It is not until in year 13, figure 5.20 the contours finally show a reduction in noise levels but then this is only based on computer modelling.

Based on the above it appears the noise bund is really there to store overburden while the mine is extending and will be for a long time before it may give some noise protection.

Low Frequency Noise. The EIS shows a preference for the Broner approach to LFN. This method and its implications are not in accordance with the INP. Refer to the requirement in development approvals or recommendations issued by DoPI to comply with the NSW Industrial Noise Policy (INP). In particular we refer to the modifications in Section 4 of the INP as they relate to coal mining activities.

The NSW INP and its modifications are there to protect the community from undue disturbing noise and annoyance. We are of the opinion that the current NSW INP with modifications for LFN would be adequate to protect the community, if they were enforced (which they are not).

In the interests of the communities surrounding the open cut mines, the INP must be the basis of compliance.

Visual Impact The bund being basically the overburden from the mining operations will result in long term visual impacts on the residents of Bulga. As stated in section 5.9.5 the visual impact of this wall while being established will be approximately three years however rehabilitation will take some time to establish. The residents of Bulga will be suffering the visual impact of this overburden wall for a long time.

Dust from the open cut mine and the proposed bund wall. The Hunter Valley already has serious problems with dust causing health problems. The villages of Bulga and Broke being surrounded by mines already experience more dust than anywhere else. There should be no further expansion of open cut coal mines in the Hunter Valley. The greatest current danger to residents' health is dust and pollution produced by open cut coal mines. The mining companies are unable to control the dust and there appears to be little policing by the government departments in minimising dust impact on residents.

With Mount Thorley mine immediately on the Northern Boundary it will not be possible in adverse weather conditions to differentiate between the mines when identifying dust sources.

While the mine has plans for dust mitigation it will be difficult to monitor and enforce compliance and so "no confident conclusion can be reached that the air quality impacts of the project will be acceptable in practice" Quote from Judge Preston, *Bulga Milbrodale Progress Association Inc v Minister for Planning and Infrastructure and Warkworth Mining Limited* [2013] NSWLEC 48

It is undesirable for governments to inflict a proposal on a community that has a high apprehension of health, injury or other serious environmental dangers. The government has a Duty of Care. This Duty of Care is compounding as each new mine opens or expands as the life of coal mining in the Hunter Valley lengthens.

Charlton Road. Charlton Road has historic and heritage significance, forming part of the original Great North Road constructed in the 1830s and extending 240 km from Sydney to Jerrys Plains. The Great North Road has state and national heritage significance. Relocation of any section of the road system would destroy its heritage significance.

The section from Broke to Warkworth including Wallaby Scrub Road is one of the last surviving examples of Surveyor-General Thomas Mitchell's expertise in straight-line road surveying. Singleton Council has supported local residents in preserving Wallaby Scrub Road in its current form and line and this support should be shown for Charlton Road.

The noise bund should not be built on the Charlton Road alignment and to the west of Charlton Road. By building the bund to the east of Charlton Road there will be a loss of coal resources but the damage to the heritage Charlton Road and to the EECs is too big a price to pay for those coal resources.

Charlton Road must continue to maintain its original alignment otherwise there is no heritage value left.

Employment. Employment is often stated as the most important item that offsets the impact of open cut mining and the EIS refers to “strength of coal markets resulting in strong levels of employment and investment.

Recent market forces are having a major impact on coal prices resulting in major layoffs from coal mines and thus diminishing this advantage. Also the majority of the mine’s workers travel in from outside of the area thus creating substantial increases in traffic and other associated impacts. We as residents of Bulga anticipated a closure of the open cut mine in 2025 and find that extending this with the associated impacts to 2035 to be unacceptable. The EIS states the extension will delay the impact of withdrawal of employees by 17 years. However this flawed approach can be applied to any closure date of a mine no matter when it occurs.

Heritage. The Environmental Assessment ignores the non-registered heritage items, St Mark’s Church and Cemetery at Bulga. Graves within the Cemetery have collapsed in recent years as a direct result of mine blast ground vibration.

The proposal to relocate excavate parts of the nationally significant Charlton Road which forms part of the original Great North Road running from Sydney to Jerrys Plains is outrageous and should never be considered.

There must be serious concerns regarding the mining company proposal to remove or destroy culturally significant aboriginal treasures within the mining area. The various tribes were camped over a wide area including that area proposed to be mined. That extended area should be included in the conservation zone. The whole locality should be protected in perpetuity as a unique sacred cultural place of national Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal significance.

Date for mine closure. The residents of Bulga anticipated a closure of the Bulga open cut mine in 2025. With the Mount Thorley mine closing in 2017 (and as advised in this EIS Bulga open cut could close in 2018) the residents of Broke and Bulga were looking forward to having their surrounding countryside reinstated back to original or similar pre mining condition. The extensions with the associated impacts to 2035 are unacceptable not only because of the conditions we would have to live with, dust, noise etc as stated above but also because of these conditions our properties and homes have now reduced in their value due to the ever extensions of mines.

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