

## **350.org Australia Submission on Wilpinjong Extension Project**

*350.org Australia is part of a global movement taking action to halt the climate crisis. We have 55,000 supporters in Australia and local volunteer groups in most major cities.*

*The number 350 means climate safety: to preserve a liveable planet, scientists tell us we must reduce the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere from its current level of 400 parts per million to below 350ppm.*

**350.org Australia strongly oppose the expansion of the Wilpinjong Extension for the following reasons:**

### **1. Social and Community Impacts**

The expanded Wilpinjong mine will come within 1.5km of residents of the Hunter Valley village of Wollar and even Peabody's own report admits it will destroy the town.

Coal mining has already destroyed the social fabric of Wollar. Once a bustling farming town in the Hunter Valley -- the community have now lost both their churches, their mechanic and their fire brigade -- as families have been forced to sell up and leave the area to protect their health. Peabody already own 70% of land in the area and now want to expand even further.

The cumulative social impact of loss of population through mining projects across the region has not been considered.

For years the community have suffered from the impacts of nearby open cut coal mines -- severe noise, dust and the stench of burning coal stockpiles. The noise assessment, monitoring and mitigation measures are highly inadequate.

Pollution from coal dust is a serious health concern and has been associated with a number of serious respiratory diseases. Air quality

has not been assessed against the new standards adopted in December 2015.

## **2. Climate Impacts**

Science tells us that to avoid the worst effects of climate change 80% of fossil fuels need to stay in the ground. Yet, the ongoing coal extraction at Wilpinjong will produce an additional 20 million tonnes of greenhouse gas per year, which will exacerbate the impacts of climate change.

Australia recently committed to the Paris Accord, which aims to keep the world to 1.5 degrees of warming. To meet our obligations under the Paris accord Australia needs to move towards renewable energy sources as rapidly as possible and cease the expansion of existing coal mines.

## **3. The project is not necessary**

Currently in Australia, black coal power stations are operating well below capacity -- at approximately 50%.

Even AGL, the company who owns Bayswater Power Station recognises the need to transition away from coal as a power source and plans to close Bayswater by the year 2035<sup>1</sup>, and are now calling on the Government to support coal closure which means the station may close even sooner.

The contract to supply AGL's Bayswater Power Station can be met by the current approval.

The expansion is entirely unnecessary to meet NSW's energy needs and Peabody's own contract with AGL.

## **4. Cultural and Natural Heritage**

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<sup>1</sup> <http://reneweconomy.com.au/2015/agl-plans-to-shut-down-coal-decarbonise-generation-by-2050-2050>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.smh.com.au/environment/peabody-flags-australian-coal-mine->

- The area has significant landscape Aboriginal cultural heritage values that have not been assessed in a regional context.
- The extension will remove 354 ha of remnant native vegetation impacting 24 threatened species and communities – more than the current approval. The biodiversity offsets will not provide sufficient habitat for the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater.
- The extension removes existing buffer zones for the Munghorn Gap Nature Reserve.

Furthermore – Peabody Energy is in a very tenuous financial situation – losing 93% of its share value over a 12 month period<sup>2</sup>. It is very likely they will not be in a position to adequately rehabilitate the three final voids in the landscape that will impact the local environment and waterways.

Sincerely

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.smh.com.au/environment/peabody-flags-australian-coal-mine-cuts-as-shares-lose-93-in-a-year-20150728-gimldx.html>