



Matthew Riley  
Senior Planning Officer  
Resource Assessments Department of Planning & Environment  
GPO Box 39 SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Mr Riley,

*Re: Submission of objection to the Wilpinjong Extension Project*

As a local Landholder, also as a Regional and Community Development Practitioner working and teaching in social and environmental sustainability I am acutely aware of the impacts that an extension of this nature will bring to the local community and its surrounding environment. Cumulative long term influences of identified impacts on the environment and social spheres are significant and irreversible and have not been in any way properly measured and accounted for. It was noted by myself and others that the assessments conducted by the NSW Government has not included in any guidelines, policy or appropriate qualitative and quantitated assessments of cumulative/long term impacts on water sources, biodiversity, Aboriginal cultural heritage, human health, social fabric or broader environmental issues such as greenhouse gas emissions. The ramifications that impact on the social fabric of a community must be taken into account in all cases and particularly in the case of the Wilpinjong extension project where a community at present are indicating health issues. But what concerns me are the impacts from social isolation, forced removal from a community that these people have been part of for much of their lives can lead to high incidence of depression, ill health and even suicide. I have witnessed this first hand with my work in Queensland around large infrastructure projects while employed by the Government. What has also *not* been accounted for, again, is the cumulative social impacts of mining on the rural communities from Ulan to Bylong having not been considered or adequately assessed. Evidence indicates that the impacts on the Wollar community from the current Wilpinjong Mine operations are already too great. The loss of social fabric and rural community across the landscape between Ulan and Bylong and as there has been insufficient assessment into social impacts gives reason that this Extension should not be approved. Wilpinjong Extension Project EIS 2015, Main Report p 6-25 8 Wilpinjong Extension Project EIS 2015, App M p 38 9 The loss of volunteer members and viability of the Ulan, Wollar and Bylong Bushfire Brigades is a significant social impact that has not been adequately addressed by any quantitative assessment conducted in the Mid-Western Regional LGA. The capacity for the remaining community to protect itself from large wildfires and to provide volunteer assistance to the National Parks and Wildlife Service during hazard reduction burns and on park fire-fighting has been seriously diminished. The increased isolation of remaining rural residents and loss of services needs to be addressed. The proposed extension of Wilpinjong Mine will further intensify these social problems. Through loss of community, with severe impacts on health and wellbeing from displacement and depression and also from loss of volunteers and no solutions to address these issues then it would become difficult to justify the approval of this extension. I do believe that this is a very serious impact that is irreversible. Aboriginal Cultural Heritage has significant cultural heritage areas that again have not been properly assessed, particularly as a cumulative of impacts from all the mining operations in the Goulburn River area. Over the period of 9 years of operation Wilpinjong has provided major, unpredicted social impacts on the Wollar community because of noise, dust and spontaneous combustion pollution. The mine is operating in a very sensitive environmental area between two major conservation reserves, Munghorn Gap Nature Reserve and Goulburn River National Park.



The combined loss of wildlife corridors and significant threatened species habitat approved across the Wilpinjong, Moolarben and Ulan mine expansions will have major short term impacts that have not been recognised or assessed. The area provides significant habitat for the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater including recorded breeding sites. The ongoing loss of habitat for declining woodland bird species has not been considered. There has been continuing pressure on habitat competition within the Reserve due to approved clearing of significant areas of adjacent remnant vegetation through mining approvals. The cumulative loss of habitat for specialist threatened species is causing increased competition for feeding and breeding values within the reserve system. The proposal to clear an additional 354 ha of remnant vegetation containing three endangered ecological communities and habitat for 20 threatened woodland birds and mammals, including the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater, is unacceptable and will not be adequately compensated for in the proposed biodiversity offset strategy. The proposed additional clearing will compound the current problems caused by the regional loss of significant vegetation and increase the pressures on the habitat competition in the adjacent reserves.

The severe breakdown in the loss of local community of Wollar, the community's health and continued wellbeing has clearly not been addressed. The cumulative loss of significant regional Aboriginal cultural heritage that has and will be destroyed has clearly not been addressed. The three operating and the proposed Bylong coal mines are on the headwaters of the Upper Goulburn River water source and with the cumulative, long term extraction on groundwater and base flows to the Goulburn /Hunter River systems are highly significant and it's an imperative that this must be included in any costs benefits and public benefit analysis. Much evidence is available to indicate the severe impacts to the surrounding sensitive biodiversity and water sources from the proposed expansion are too extensive and this evidence should be available to highlight the cumulative environmental impacts as a whole. These components of the assessment clearly have not been addressed nor the provision of further conclusive independent studies and in my opinion more assessments, both qualitative and quantitative need to be forthcoming both on the impacts to the surrounding environment and on the social and cultural anomalies to allow for a professional informed decision.

Yours Sincerely

Marie Hensley