

NSW Government Planning & Infrastructure  
GPO Box 39  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

**Attention:** Director Mining and Industry Projects  
**Re:** Watermark Coal Mine  
**App No.:** SSD – 4975, Watermark Coal Project

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**Disclose reportable donations:** I have made a reportable political donation ~~Yes~~/No.

**Privacy Statement:** I have read the Department's Privacy Statement and agree to the Department using my submission in the ways it describes. I understand this includes full publication on the Department's website of my submission, any attachments, and any of my personal information in those documents, and possible supply to third parties such as state agencies, local government and the proponent. I agree to the above statement? Yes/~~No~~

**If you answer no, you do not wish your personal details to be included in the submission, your personal and contact details should be provided on a separate page and not included in your submission.**

I am a member of the Carroona Coal Action Group and a Liverpool Plains landholder and resident. I, along with my family, run a mixed farming enterprise in the area. My family and I object to the proposed Shenhua Watermark Coal Mine at Breeza NSW.

I have reviewed the submission prepared by Earth Systems for the Carroona Coal Action Group (CCAG) and I am writing in full support of the CCAG submission.

This project will have colossal impacts on our community and region; many of these will be negative and regrettably irreversible. While the primary argument in favour of 'developing' the coal resources of EL 7223 has been based on economics, the submission prepared by Economists At Large, which I have also reviewed, brings even this aspect into serious doubt. The negative social and environmental impacts of the project will certainly outweigh the positive, and thus the project is not considered in the best interests of the region, and ultimately the State.

There is a broad spectrum of impacts which are concerning, including but not limited to:

*1. Social impacts.*

Having made an unusual decision for an educated female youth, I returned back to the family farm where I now live and work alongside my brother and parents. The Liverpool Plains retains a higher percentage of its agricultural youth than in many parts of Australia due to its high productivity, proximity to major centres and capital cities, inherently beautiful aesthetic and favourable climate. These attributes have enabled a strong sense of culture and community to develop right across the Liverpool Plains; many of those that live and work here have a strong sense of identity associated with the country on which they live and that they love. All this is evidenced overtly by the prosocial behaviour exhibited by a huge number of residents from areas on the Liverpool Plains but outside the boundaries of EL 7223 who have lent their support to those in the immediate impacts areas.

This wonderful sense of belonging and group cooperation has developed over many years, however is under threat with this proposed development at Watermark. There are a number of specific impacts which are likely to result if the project is allowed to go ahead.

- At an individual level for those in close proximity to the project, there will be a great deal of stress and anxiety caused by both the physical impacts of the mine and the uncertainty stemming from the possibility of future expansions compromising both the residents' homes and businesses. The psychological consequences of these include anxiety disorders and depression, and physiological manifestations may negatively impact health.
- At an individual level for those in the surrounding areas, the uncertainty regarding property rights and government policy will again cause stress and anxiety which may negatively impact psychological and/or physiological health.
- On a social level, the delicate sense of culture and belonging among Liverpool Plains farmers would be threatened by the dissolution of individuals' sense of security.

No Impact Statement or Assessment Process prepared by the Proponent can capture these intangible attributes of the people who live and work in the area. Understandably, attempts to quantify these impacts would be met with scepticism however this does not indicate their absence.

Already, the uncertainty that the exploration for coal at Breeza and Caroona and the exploration for coal seam gas right across the region have brought a great deal of angst and anguish to the farming community. This has detracted substantially from peoples' personal and professional lives.

## *2. Socio-economic and Generational Equity*

Whether the "economic" benefits of this Project are realised or not is irrelevant if one begins to question the foundations of this measure of success. Strictly economic measures are well recognised for failing to capture key topics such as environmental degradation, well-being, generational equity, sustainability and degradation of the natural resource base.

Planning, assessing and reporting in line with the Green Growth Indicators developed by the OECD may provide a better method for evaluation than that currently in use. The indicators have been selected according to specified criteria and embedded in a conceptual framework structured around the following four groups<sup>1</sup>:

- i.* Environmental and resource productivity, to indicate whether economic growth is becoming greener with more efficient use of natural capital and to capture aspects of production which are rarely quantified in economic models and accounting frameworks;
- ii.* The natural asset base, to indicate the risks to growth from a declining natural asset base;
- iii.* Environmental quality of life, to indicate how environmental conditions affect the quality of life and wellbeing of people;
- iv.* Economic opportunities and policy responses, to indicate the effectiveness of policies in delivering green growth and describe the societal responses needed to secure business and employment opportunities.

In the long term it is indicators such as these that will actually matter to the people of NSW (and Australia more widely) more than the economic growth of a particular historical year. It is therefore the responsibility of the current government to consider projects on this basis to ensure long term and sustainable socioeconomic improvements and generational equity.

## *3. Koala*

Gunnedah is proudly the Koala Capital and those of us who reside in the area are proud of this. The Australian Koala Foundation (AKF) disputes the number of koalas located in the local government area. AKF are opposed to the translocation of the koalas from the Shenhua area, a position which I

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/greengrowth/greengrowthindicators.htm> accessed 10/5/13

support given koala habitat is already under pressure. The Earth Systems Review further highlights the shortcomings of Shenhua's proposed Koala Management Plan – flaws which are unacceptable.

#### 4. Water

As highlighted by the Earth Systems Review of Shenhua's EIS, water quality impacts of the Project have not been adequately assessed and management measures have not been adequately developed to address those impacts. The risk of contaminated water being released from the sediment dam during rainfall events where it exceeds the capacity is unacceptable. With the unpredictable rainfall events evidenced most recently as January this year, this situation is considered most probable and the releasing of contaminated water across the black soil plains and into our ground water systems is also intolerable.

It is stated in the proposal that:

- there is a potential for the reduction of catchment flows to surrounding waterways including the Mooki River, Watermark Gully, Native Dog Gully and Lake Goran with 25% loss at Watermark
- groundwater levels are predicted to largely recover rapidly
- a reduced rate of upward flow from the Permian to the alluvium is predicted

These predictions and forecasts by the Proponent are of great concern to our community.

#### 5. Ecology

A total of 4,084 ha of vegetation will be removed progressively over the life of the project. This is a very large loss of vegetation and most certainly not allowed for any industry outside of mining; nor should it be allowed for the proposed Watermark Project.

#### 6. Future Expansion

It is stated in the EIS that a final void will remain in the Western Mining Area and will cover an area of approx. 100 hectares. It will have a maximum depth of 80 metres below the natural ground surface. This is the outcome that is recommended by the mining company as it is the most cost effective method plus it allows opportunity for access to coal resources. This raises concerns for our community as we are not talking about a one off mine but an opportunity for future expansion with further risk to water resources, agricultural land and people's health.

Given the cumulative impacts of further development will be substantial, if there is any possibility that this Project will ever be granted an extension then these should be considered prior to the approval of the initial Project.

If not, then the Watermark Project currently proposed, if approved, should be granted on the condition that no extension will be granted.

## 7. Noise

The proposed mine is located near the village of Breeza in Northern NSW which is a quiet rural area. Infrasound/low frequency noise (ILFN) produced by machinery is known to be a problem in these types of areas due to the lack of background noise. ILFN is known to cause cardiovascular disorders, psychological problems and stress. It is of great concern to the community that Shenhua is not completing any assessment on low frequency noise as stated in the EIS "Acoustics Impact Assessment 4.6 Low Frequency Noise - no separate assessment of low frequency noise levels is required".

## 8. Freight Impacts

The agricultural businesses of the region rely on access to the Port of Newcastle for both supplies and delivery of produce to market. Increased mining activity to the north west has already seen rail lines become increasingly congested and the proposed Project will only exacerbate this problem resulting in an increasing reliance on road freight. The Kamilaroi Highway is a major artery for road freight travelling to and from Port, and will also see increased traffic loads should this development go ahead. The result would be a huge amount of pressure on agricultural deliveries.

Furthermore, all towns and properties along the rail line will be impacted by additional noise and dust from increased coal train movements.

*If the Government approves this project, they are knowingly approving the detrimental impacts of this mine at the cost of the landholders and the community.*

END