

## AYCC Wollongong Submission to Proposed Russell Vale Expansion

The Wollongong branch of the Australian Youth Climate Coalition (AYCC) objects to the proposed expansion of Russell Vale Colliery.

AYCC are an organization of young people concerned with the future. This proposal directly threatens our future in three key ways:

This expansion will inevitably damage Sydney's water catchment (that also provides water to Wollongong). Following previous long wall mining expansions under the water catchment at Russell Vale and Dendrobium Collieries, the bedrock of the rivers and swamps above have cracked. These swamps and rivers have since dried up and are no longer supporting the natural life they once did, nor contributing to the water supply of Australia's largest city. It has been assessed that it is "essentially impossible to reliably determine how much water was actually being lost" by these mines<sup>1</sup>. Sydney has recently entered drought conditions. We cannot afford to lose even more water down cracks into coal mines. If mining under the catchment continues, today's young people may face a future in which Sydney is constantly in drought, due to a sieve-like water catchment.

Not only do the existing long wall mines under the catchment deplete water reserves and swamp environments, they also heavily pollute what water is left. The water of 5 million people is being poisoned by these mines, but Wollongong Coal still wishes to extend further. Wollongong Coal has kept a huge slagheap of low-grade coal on their Russell Vale site for many years now (I do not remember a time when it was not there). This is very near to residential areas and is a fire hazard and a source of airborne coal dust to the local community. After heavy rains, Bellambi creek runs black with coal. Wollongong Coal clearly does not care about the health and welfare of the local community.

In addition to the extensive direct effects of the proposed expansion, this project would also contribute to the global threat of climate change. The science on climate change is clear – the world must act now to mitigate the worst of what is coming. The coal industry wishes the world to believe that coal is necessary for electricity and steel production. This is a fabrication designed to keep a dirty and dwindling industry alive for a few more decades. There is an abundance of renewable alternatives for electricity and carbon-neutral steel is just around the corner<sup>2</sup>. The producers of coal are as responsible for emissions as those who burn it. Tackling climate change must be a global effort, with as many parties on board as possible. Do not be the one that lets the team down. Do not approve the expansion of Russell Vale Colliery.

Sincerely, and with hope for our futures,

The Wollongong AYCC team:

Dylan Green, Saoirse Aherne, Cali Pusell, Lola Bell, Michael Gould, Grace Ewart, Zeb Critchley, Miranda Green, Claire Rogers, Andy Telfer, Rosie Brodie, Declan Moylan, Isabella Todd, Zahra Spitznagel-Reeves, Choeli Cooper, Romini Critchley.



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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.smh.com.au/environment/sustainability/shocking-mining-damage-in-sydney-s-catchment-prompts-calls-for-halt-20190726-p52azm.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.euractiv.com/section/energy/interview/hybrit-ceo-our-pilot-steel-plant-will-only-emit-water-vapour/>