

“Reclaiming our Valley”

Hunter Communities Network

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Submission of Objection

MT ARTHUR COAL MODIFICATION (09_0062 MOD 1)

The Hunter Communities Network (HCN) is an alliance of community based groups and individuals impacted by the current coal industry and concerned about the ongoing rapid expansion of coal and coal seam gas exploration and mining in the region.

HCN objects to the proposed modification of the Mt Arthur Coal because of the cumulative impact on the community of Muswellbrook Shire and surrounding industries from increased air pollution, the increase in daily train movements from 24 to 38, the loss of Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land, the cumulative impact on the Hunter alluvial system and base flows, and loss of biodiversity.

HCN does not support the over inflated economic assessment and believes that the number of direct and indirect jobs proposed to be produced by this modification is misleading information.

The export price of thermal and coking coal is continuing to fall and many mines in the Hunter region are becoming unviable. The economic assessment for this proposal does not reflect these current circumstances. The price of coal is estimated to average \$97 per tonne which is no longer a valid price as world demand for thermal coal has changed.

The long-term environmental and social cost of this proposal has not been adequately assessed, including the economic viability of the operation.

The cumulative impact of this proposal on groundwater and surface water systems has not been adequately addressed in the Environmental Assessment. This is particularly in relation to the proposed adjacent Drayton South open cut mine currently being assessed by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure (DP&I).

HCN does not support the increase in aquifer interference and increase in salinity levels in the Hunter River system caused by this proposal. The impact on downstream water users has not been taken into account.

The proposal to continue extracting up to 32 mtpa of ROM coal for an additional four years cannot be justified in terms of the irreparable damage to the Hunter River system, threatened vegetation communities and loss of threatened species habitat, and increased impacts on other viable neighbouring industries including thoroughbred horse breeding.

HCN does not support the proposed destruction of a further 230ha of native vegetation, including 58ha of the critically endangered Grassy Box Gum Woodland.


Mt Arthur Coal has approval to continue extracting coal for a further 9 years. During this time the Hunter Valley will need to be transitioning into other long-term industries with a smaller ecological and social footprint.

The current health impacts from existing large opencut operations in Muswellbrook Shire have not been adequately assessed. The results of NSW Department of Health Upper Hunter Fine Particle Characterisation study have not yet been released.

Mt Arthur operations burn a very large quantity of diesel and are responsible for a significant load of fine particle pollution. This issue has not been addressed in the Environmental Assessment of the proposed modification.

HCN is concerned that DP&I continues to show a bias towards coal mining activities in the Hunter Valley to the detriment of a diverse economy and strong rural community base.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "B. Smiles". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bev Smiles
On behalf of the Hunter Communities Network