

Angus Place Extension Project SSD-5602

We OBJECT to the project

The Angus Place extension is for a mining project running until 2053, some 33 years or a generation from 2020. In view of the multiple issues surrounding the mining and utilisation of thermal coal this is unreasonable on a number of grounds. It carries the unwarranted assumptions that thermal coal as a fuel for generating electricity will be financially sustainable for the next 33 years despite evidence that it is today not competitive with alternative, less polluting techniques, and that technological change will not advance the next three decades to further supplant this environmentally challenged process. Even now the combustion of coal to generate electricity is viewed as obsolete with no commercial desire for private enterprise to invest in generators using this process in Australia, and for plants using the process and planned for development overseas being progressively abandoned. So why does Centennial Coal wish to proceed with this project? Australian thermal coal mining is likely to have a much shorter life than 33 years and the only reason I can envisage for the company wishing to continue to hold permission to mine for this length of time is so that, once public-driven enlightened government policy leads to the closing down of such mines, the company hopes to seek compensation from the public purse for being forced to 'abandon' the huge mine into which it will allege it has invested great amounts of money on the basis of previously agreed mining permission. Should development of the project be allowed at the very least it should be on the basis of the company being fully aware of such 'sovereign risk' and that earlier closure of the mine, for whatever reason, will not lead to Centennial making compensation claims on State or Federal Governments, nor be allowed to withdraw without fully rehabilitating the site.

Greenhouse gas pollution leading to global warming is but one of the detrimental by-products of the mining and utilisation of Angus Park thermal coal. The disruption of the natural hydrological cycle is another, with the natural surface water flow over an area of the western Blue Mountains in excess of 10.5 thousand hectares being drained into the cavernous mine voids by way of mining-induced fissuring, joint expansion and irregular cracking of the strata overlying the coal seam. During the passage of the water underground it will be polluted by soluble salts, notably but not limited to sodium chloride, predominantly derived from the coal measures. This now saline water will eventually provide cooling water for the Mt Piper thermal power station but only after having been pumped through a desalination plant. Here most of the salt will be separated by reverse osmosis, a by product of which will be a watery brine, the ultimate destination of which is unclear, but which may end up in the already salt-laden Murray-Darling Basin.

The diversion of the surface water will lead to much-reduced stream flow and the dehydration of natural swamps along the valley systems of the Newnes State Forest. This will have a dramatic effect on the specialised fauna and flora, including nationally listed endangered species, that inhabit these watery ecosystems which also provide refuges during drought and bushfire for native terrestrial fauna.

The landscape and the biodiversity of the region around the proposed mine development has been increasingly recognised as an area of great tourist value, with spectacular canyons, waterfalls, sandstone cliffs and isolated erosional remnants termed pagodas placed within a background of native forests and heath home to a rich diversity of native animals and plants. Even the proponents of the colliery extension admit that irreparable damage to the landscape is inevitable if the development proceeds. The potential of the region for non-destructive interaction between people

and nature and the preservation of an increasingly shrinking unsullied landscape should not be compromised – it cannot be compensated for by any amount of ‘offset money’.

Intergenerational equity requires that a project extending over a timescale of tens of decades considers the balance between what the present generation derives from the project and what succeeding generations will inherit from it. While there are presumably commercial benefits to be derived from the exploitation of the sale of the coal and the electricity it will generate it is difficult to find other than an increasingly polluted environment (both atmosphere and biosphere), a degraded landscape, less equitable and less healthy living conditions, and a reduced natural heritage as the endowment left to our children and grandchildren.

Submission on behalf of the Belubula Headwaters Protection Group

Daniel Sutton (President)

Evan Leitch (Secretary)

28-04-2020

The Belubula Protection Group Inc has not made political donations or gifts totalling \$1000 or more in the last two years