

## *“Reclaiming our Valley”*

### Hunter Communities Network

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PO Box 14 Singleton 2330

Department of Planning, Infrastructure & Environment\  
Locked Bag 5022,  
Parramatta NSW 2124

Tuesday 16 March 2021

#### **Mt Pleasant Optimisation Project: No 26611**

##### **OBJECTION:**

Hunter Communities Network 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.

We strongly object to the Mt Pleasant expansion for the following reasons:

1. The cumulative impact of coal mining in the Upper Hunter, particularly up against the township of Muswellbrook, has already exceeded many triggers of sustainability from a social, environmental and economic perspective.
2. The ongoing land use conflict with the agricultural and horse-breeding industries in the Upper Hunter is not being fairly managed, as proposed through the Upper Hunter Strategic Land Use Plan 2012.
3. The ongoing loss of local landholders in the Muswellbrook LGA is significant and is not adequately assessed or mitigated. The Mt Pleasant expansion has identified another 30 rural residents that will be impacted by the project to the degree of triggering acquisition rights. The cumulative loss of local community members to service vital volunteer organisations such as the Rural Fire Service is critical and not replaced by mine workers on 12 hour shifts.
4. The air quality monitoring in the Muswellbrook area repeatedly reports poor air quality at levels well above the national standard. The proximity of the Mt Pleasant mine operations to Muswellbrook is a critical issue. The ongoing irresponsible approach of the NSW Government towards protecting public health in the Upper Hunter is contemptable.

5. The proposed overburden dump to a height, in places, of approximately 360m has not been assessed for potential interference to emergency service, radio and television communication transmitted from the Roscole tower to the west of Muswellbrook. The current approved height of 220m for the overburden dump is already close to blocking line of site to Muswellbrook communication receivers. Any additional height is an imminent threat of transmission interference and must be adequately assessed.
6. The proposed permanent loss of base flows to the Hunter River of up to 40 million litres per year is a significant increase in loss of permanent base flows across the Upper Hunter. The impact of groundwater reporting to mined landscapes in perpetuity has not been assessed across the region as a cumulative impact. Water resources are the most critical element of survival in a drying climate. Ongoing loss of base flows to the Hunter River require more releases from Glenbawn Dam to supply water demand downstream. Climate change predictions for the Upper Hunter indicate lower inflows to storages. The loss of good quality and highly productive water into final voids and mined landscapes is a long term legacy of coal mining with significant social, environmental and economic costs, into the future, that have not been assessed or included in costs benefits analysis.
7. The concept that coal can continue to be produced and used up to 2048, when the world is working towards net zero carbon emissions by 2050, is unrealistic. The creation of safer, cleaner jobs from renewable energy production in the Upper Hunter and diversification of the economy is the most responsible way forward for the community. The Mt Pleasant expansion is the wrong project at this time in history and must be rejected.

Yours sincerely

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

Bev Smiles  
Convenor