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Planning Services Dept. Planning, Industry and Environment GPO Box 39 Sydney NSW 2001

Re: McPhillamy's Gold Project

I am writing to you on behalf of the Environmentally Concerned Citizens of Orange (ECCO) for the purpose of expressing our objections to the proposal put forward by the McPhillamy organisation to establish a gold mine at King's Plains. ECCO is a local environmental group which has a long history of environmental advocacy. As such we have serious concerns about the environmental impacts of the proposed mine, which should not proceed for the following reasons.

Impact on local water resources Our region, like many others in Australia, is currently in the grip of drought. Many towns are in danger of running out of water. It is indefensible to propose any new mining activity while this situation persists. Additionally, regardless of whether this drought breaks or not in the near future, climate science projections indicate that our future climate will continue to be subject to reduced rainfall and a scenario where drastic adaptive measures will be necessary to ensure water security for essential use, which does not include water for mines.

Such adaptive measures will require a different perception on what is currently regarded as "waste water," such as is suggested by the proposal in the form of "waste water" to be pumped from the Springvale colliery for the proposed mine. In what is promising to be a climate future in our region where every drop is precious, there will be no such thing as "waste water". We will be compelled to find ways to use whatever water we have for essentials. A worst case future climate scenario does not include squandering water on mining activities.

The proposed site of the mine is very close to the headwaters of the Belubula River. Should the mine be allowed to proceed, there will be a serious risk of contamination through leaks and leaching from tailings dams. This is a case where the precautionary principle should apply. If there is any chance of a risk of water contamination, the project should be abandoned. Our water is too precious to be gambled with.

<u>Affects on local biodiversity:</u> Australia has the unenviable distinction of being one of the world leaders in species extinction. The main reason for this dubious achievement is the amount of habitat destruction through land clearing. The proposal contributes significantly to this activity through advocating the removal of 132.26ha of ecological habitat which includes that of white box and yellow box eucalypts, as well as Blakely's redgum and related grasslands. The site in

question contains squirrel gliders and koalas, vulnerable species being supported by a small biodiverse area in an otherwise heavily cleared landscape. The proponent has suggested that offsets be provided to mitigate the effect clearing will have on local biodiversity. The mine has purchased an offset site, but apart from that has not provided the necessary environmental information to allow for scrutiny as to its suitability. Offsets have proven to be frequently ineffective as a strategy to mitigate the effects of land clearing, and are often regarded as being a

means of avoiding an environmental issue by buying a way out of it. Unless evidence to the contrary is produced, this could be what is happening in this instance.

Impact on local residents: Local residents have justifiably been highly concerned about the impact the proposed mine will have on their environment, their water supply and their quality of life. There is no reason not to believe that the impacts of this mine will be any different to any other mine, which will include unacceptable noise levels, dust, air and light pollution, impacts on domestic and stock water supplies and loss of land values. It is not acceptable to destroy the lifestyle of a community for the sake of a few jobs and short term profit.

Conclusion: This mine should not proceed. The short term financial gain and the limited employment opportunities it will provide do not justify the impact it will have on the local water supply, the loss of biodiversity of the site and the negative impact it will have on the local community.

Yours sincerely

Neil Jones President, ECCO.