

To whom it may concern

I am writing to vehemently oppose the proposed expansion of South 32's Dendrobium Mine Extension Project (SSI-33143123). I have lived in Wollongong for nearly 24 years - my entire life - and I am outraged, shocked and saddened to see this project being debated. To allow this project to proceed in our beloved Illawarra is not only extremely short-sighted and based on flawed logic, it is fundamentally unjust.

To allow the interests of big corporations, especially those that actively harm our future and the future of the planet through extractive and polluting industries, over the clear will and interests of the people and the natural environment is, frankly, wrong.

We know that this project poses incredible risk to the drinking water in the catchment - drinking water on which 5 million people rely. This is not a matter of if or maybe - we know that this project will cause mining induced subsidence, damaging the swamps and waterways that feed our precious water reservoirs. Furthermore, we know that the estimated subsidence that South 32 has reported of 2-2.45m could be conservative, as other long walls of this size have caused subsidence of up to 3m. There is a reason that no other city in the world allows this kind of longwall mining in their publicly owned water catchments - the risk is simply untenable. There is no possible scenario in which this project proceeds with no or positive impact on the water catchment - there will undoubtedly be negative impacts on both water quality and availability. The cracking and dewatering of watercourses, swamps and aquifers may well cause the loss of many millions of litres of water per day, on top of the 10 million litres of daily water loss from Dendrobium's current and past mining. The mine also carries the risk of pollution and contamination of drinking water, which the current management measures are demonstrably inadequate to address.

To put our drinking water at risk in the wake of the worst drought we've seen in our lifetimes, and in the face of even worse climate-driven water supply issues in the future, is not only an act of gross negligence, it is actively harmful to the future of the 5 million people who rely on this catchment, and any who might rely on it in the future. No amount of water recycling, water restrictions, 2 minute showers or desalinisation can protect us in this uncertain future if we allow our essential water supply infrastructure to be compromised.

The idea that this project is State Significant Infrastructure is absurd and logically flawed. The steelworks have already made arrangements for sufficient coal supply from other mines, meaning

it is not reliant on this mining project to proceed with its normal operations. Further more, Bluescope Steel have already invested heavily in investigating their transition to low and zero-carbon steel production. Bluescope understands, as should South 32 and the NSW government, that coal is a dying industry. Coal prices continue to rise as renewable alternatives become more and more affordable. Not only can we not afford to continue investing in coal from a financial stance, the planet and the climate can no longer afford the impacts of this incredibly polluting and climate wrecking industry.

The environmental and climate impacts of this project go beyond compromising our ability to be resilient to future climate crises and impacts - this project will actively contribute to the issue of global climate change. This project has the potential to be the 4th highest emitting coal mine in NSW. A burden that will fall on my generation and those after me to solve as we continue to live through the worst that the climate crisis has to offer.

The proposed mine expansion lies on the unceded lands of the Dharawal People. There are 31 Aboriginal Heritage sites in and around the area of the proposed mine expansion, 6 of which lie directly over the proposed longwalls. But this doesn't account for the connection to the land and country that local Aboriginal people have to areas not captured by these discrete sites. As an individual of a Registered Aboriginal Party commented: "From a cultural values perspective, a lot of importance has been placed on the item's locations, but in terms of cultural values everything that is on the land holds relevance to Aboriginal culture. Sites are the story law, and everything that forms part of the land provides context to the story of the culture. It's about whole of country rather than specific sites. Sadly, the mining company's response to the impact of this mine expansion on Aboriginal people and Aboriginal culture and heritage is that further reducing the impact on Aboriginal culture and heritage "may be less economically viable".

While South 32 are required to monitor these Indigenous cultural sites, there is no requirement to preserve or avoid these sites, and South32 will suffer no penalties when it destroys them. It is reprehensible for mining interests to be allowed to desecrate Aboriginal Cultural Heritage whilst the area remains out-of-bounds for the local Aboriginal community.

There are many more negative impacts that this project will have - from the destruction of critical koala habitat which would place an already endangered population at higher risk of extinction, to the devastating impacts on the unique upland swamp and aquatic ecosystems, to the potential of increased risk of bushfires in the area, again in the wake of the worst drought and bushfire seasons we've seen in our lifetimes.

I am sure that many others writing in opposition to this project have covered these issues in more detail. But you already know all of this - you know the risks and the impacts because this fight has been waging for years now. If anything, the evidence against this project and the true scale of damage and destruction that may be suffered should this project proceed have only become more and more apparent as this fight has waged on.

This is not just a matter of safeguarding drinking water, although that should surely be enough. This is a matter of climate, environmental, intergenerational, social, and First Nations justice. To place the interests of a dying and damaging industry over those of people and the planet is shortsighted, shallow and actively harmful.

So I beseech you, please. Do not allow this or any other mining project to proceed in our catchment. Protect our water, our people and our future and keep Wollongong wet.

Sincerely,

Isabella Todd

Wollongong Resident