

Make a submission against the Bylong mine

The Bylong Valley is a spectacular part of the Upper Hunter where productive alluvial soils are surrounded by dramatic sandstone escarpments. It's a landscape rich in the paintings, shelters, artefacts and ochre quarries of the Wiradjuri people. It hosts a "living laboratory" of the experimental Natural Sequence Farming technique, mastered at historic Tarwyn Park by Peter Andrews.

A large coal mine is proposed in the middle of the Bylong Valley, tearing up rich agricultural soils and drawing down a productive aquifer till the water might run out altogether.

Bizarrely, the NSW Government has recommended approval of the mine, but the Planning and Assessment Commission will decide if it should proceed and we need everyone to tell them to stop this mine.

Can you make a submission to the Planning and Assessment Commission opposing this terrible project?

IMPORTANT NOTE: re: the Planning & Assessment Commission's "public hearing" for its review.
The Planning and Assessment Commission can review a project without holding a public hearing. It holds public hearings at the request of the Planning Minister and the only effect of these hearings is to extinguish the public's right to appeal the merits of a final decision approving a mine in court.
For this reason, the Hunter and Central Rivers Alliance and Bylong Valley Protection Alliance resolved to make submissions to the Review but **boycott the hearings**. We would appreciate it if you could also boycott this unfair and highly dissatisfying process!

It has been the practice of the Planning and Assessment Commission to hold "public meetings" at the decision stage of the process (this occurred recently for the nearby Wilpinjong extension, for which the community also boycotted the public hearing). These public meetings, unlike public hearings, do *not* extinguish merits appeal rights so the public can fully participate and publicly air its opposition to the project at that stage.

The deadline for submissions is 5pm on 19 May. Send your submission to pac@pac.nsw.gov.au

What you might wish to say

- The Bylong coal project is unacceptable and must not be granted consent.
- It will cause the loss of 319 hectares of strategic agricultural land and nearly 700 hectares of land that is mapped as part of the equine critical industry cluster. Such lands should be permanently and securely made off-limits to any kind of mining activity.
- The coal company, KEPCO, owns and controls nearly half the available water in the Bylong River water source and intends to redirect this water from irrigated agriculture to open cut mining. Over 440 hectares of land that currently supports irrigated agriculture will no longer do so if the mine goes ahead.
- The impacts of this project on agricultural land and water are the worst ever seen for a coal mine proposal in this state and could have far reaching consequences. There must be a limit to where mining can occur. Open-cutting strategic agricultural land and equine critical industry cluster land clearly crosses a line that must not be crossed.
- Analysis conducted at the insistence of the Department of Primary Industries shows that the volume of water proposed by KEPCO to be drawn from the alluvial aquifer could exceed its recharge, leading to depletion of the groundwater source.

- Extensive water use by and groundwater inflows to the coal mine and its close proximity to the Bylong River will cause extensive and severe draw down of the productive Bylong alluvial aquifer, well beyond the minimal impact criteria of NSW's Aquifer Interference Policy. In some places, for one of the models used, the drawdown of the alluvium exceeds 10 metres.
- KEPCO's assertion that this dramatic exceedance of the Aquifer Inference Policy criteria does not count because the mining company has purchased the properties that will be affected by this damage is not acceptable: the Bylong water source should not be subjected to this depletion for just 23 years of coal mining, leaving the Valley potentially unable to support productive agriculture into the future after the coal mine has been exhausted.
- The Department of Primary Industries has expressed concern that in dry conditions, there may be insufficient water to run the mine and has warned that some neighbouring bores may become non-viable as a result of the profound.
- Even KEPCO has agreed that the potential to reduce the availability of groundwater to agriculture during dry years is likely.
- The Department of Primary Industries is also concerned about flow on impacts to agricultural productivity in the Bylong Valley and the broader region as a result of the mine and the extensive areas of agricultural land and water now owned by the coal company.
- Among the properties now owned by KEPCO are a former thoroughbred breeding property that has already been displaced by the coal mine proposal and historic Tarwyn Park, former home of Melbourne Cup winner Rain Lover and the living laboratory where Peter Andrews developed Natural Sequence Farming practice of regenerative agriculture.
- The area targeted by the mine also harbours significant Wiradjuri cultural heritage, including artwork and an ochre quarry. The Wiradjuri heritage of the area has already experienced profound loss from three nearby coal mines and the Office of Environment and Heritage is warning of "permanent intergenerational consequences" if the loss of these sites continues.
- The mine will also remove 180 hectares of habitat for the critically endangered Regent honeyeater. The Recovery Plan for this species specifically states that "Any breeding or foraging areas where the species is likely to occur" including the area where this project occurs, is "critical to the survival" of this species. The Mudgee-Wollar area is specifically mentioned, and the Plan says that, "It is essential that the highest level of protection is provided to these areas and that enhancement and protection measures target these productive sites."
- In the six years since KEPCO moved into the Bylong region, it has bought up tens of thousands of hectares of strategic farmland, floodplains, thoroughbred properties, historic properties, homes and facilities in the region and caused substantial social and economic dislocation. In the short period KEPCO has been gobbling up the Bylong Valley, the Bylong Mouse Races have ceased, thoroughbred activity has ceased, the Bylong Upper School has ceased and many people have vacated the Valley, leaving it barely socially and economically viable.
- Remaining private landholders will be left socially & economically stranded and may lose access to water supply.
- Heavy mine vehicle traffic is proposed to travel through the Munghorn Gap Nature Reserve and Wollar village between Bylong and Mudgee. This is a popular tourist drive. Road conditions are very poor and road safety will be threatened by a massive increase of daily mine traffic and heavy vehicles.

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