

## Submission - United Wambo Open Cut Coal Mine Project – RO42/17

### I strongly object to the United Wambo Open Cut Coal Mine Project.

#### 1. Social & Health Impacts

- Increased heights and volumes of overburden will worsen air pollution.
- The Jerry's Plains air quality monitor has registered 5 exceedances so far in 2018 with existing operations. The nearby Warkworth monitor has registered 8 exceedances of national air quality standards since the beginning of the year
- The EPA Dust Stop Program and environmental pollution licences are not managing air pollution from existing mines in the area.
- Increased mine noise will impact on a least 31 additional properties in the area
- The cumulative social impacts of loss of privately owned land and farming operations has not been assessed

#### 2. Water Impacts

- The cumulative impact of three larger final voids across the two projects has not been adequately assessed, including long term costs of management
- The drawdown of base flows and alluvial groundwater associated with Wollombi Brook and the Hunter River will be increased. The cumulative loss of groundwater across the Hunter Region has not been included in the assessments.

#### 3. Biodiversity Impacts

- Impacts on biodiversity will be extreme and not able to be offset.
- United Wambo will remove over 250 ha of critically endangered and irreplaceable bushland that provides habitat for many threatened species.
- Three nationally endangered species already suffering cumulative loss of habitat due to Hunter mining expansion: Regent Honeyeater, Swift Parrot and Spotted-tailed Quoll. The cumulative loss of foraging and breeding sites has not been assessed.
- The biodiversity offset package for United Wambo has not been completed and will not replace essential habitat features.
- Remnant stands of threatened Hunter River Red Gums continue to lose sources of groundwater essential for drought resistance
- The Hunter region has lost too much of its bushland already. Promises of rehabilitation decades into the future cannot compensate for clearing wildlife habitat now.
- A biodiversity project coordinator for Birdlife Australia, Mick Roderick, said woodland birds relied on fertile valley floor forest for habitat but, in the central Hunter Valley, it was almost all gone. He said the state's land and environment court had ruled that planning decisions needed to take cumulative impacts into account but it was not always happening.

#### 4. Cumulative Impacts

- The NSW Land & Environment Court has ruled that planning decisions need to take cumulative impacts into account but this rarely happens.
- Each of these mines are assessed in isolation and It is no surprise when there is a conclusion that one mine may not have a significant impact but, when you take into account the cumulative impacts, they are profound.
- How do you monitor the void in the future because no one has accurately assessed how it will effect the environment and how it will effect ground water supplies.
- These cumulative impacts are the final straw for the remaining community between Singleton and Jerry's Plains. More than 31 private properties will be impacted.

- These very large mine expansions will cause more dust and mine noise, take more ground water, introduce three larger final voids into the Hunter landscape and destroy more bushland now listed as critically endangered.
- The idea that we would subsidise coal mines at exactly the time in world history that we are saying we want to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is bizarre economics. It's like saying we want to tackle smoking by subsidising cigarettes. It's a very strange economic choice to spend scarce taxpayer dollars subsidising an activity that we are committed to reducing.
- Why would we say we can afford to subsidise a coal mine but say we can't afford to subsidise more public health or fund people directly impacted by coal mining or other important things that would deliver benefit.

#### 5. Poor PAC Process

- Short-term politics is infecting PAC decision-making and the public needs to be given a greater say on the development and scrutiny of plans at the beginning of the planning stage instead of at the end of the approval stage where their views and input is disregarded.
- Having two public PAC events in Singleton in the one week shows complete disrespect for voluntary community resources and capacity to attend.
- This lack of consideration exposes the public PAC process for the cursory farce that it is.
- As with many of the PAC Meetings I have attended, Commissioners will approve this mine with strict conditions but those conditions will never be met or policed correctly.