

Watermark Coal Project (SSD 4975) Gunnedah Local Government Area Review

I would like to contribute input to the Assessment of the proposed Watermark Coal Project (SSD 4975).

My concerns relate in particular to the many koalas as well as the other native animals that live in the area that is proposed to be mined.

As a licensed wildlife carer, I have spent hundreds of hours over several years helping koalas in the area that to be impacted by the proposed mine. There are large numbers of koalas in this area. Many were affected by the drought, others were impacted by disease, others had been hit on the roads or on the rail line. One poor animal was found near to the rail line at Breeza with a severed arm. This koala, unfortunately, did not survive but many of the animals taken into care have been later released at their original location. This is the very area that is to be mined or affected by the mine. Anyone who has attended the release of a koala to their home range will testify as to it being a very joyful experience. Many of the koalas that have been released in the proposed Watermark project area will be again threatened.

Koalas need trees but not just any tree; they need their own feed trees. Some animals that have been taken into care for a short while will not eat leaves from trees that are outside their usual area. Koalas also need lots of trees because they eat lots of leaves every night. They also need access to water, especially in summer – a fact that many people do not realize. The extra traffic especially the large increase in number of mine vehicles will cause increased many of koalas and other native animals being injured and killed.

Where the Watermark Coal Project is to be situated, there are large numbers of koalas which will probably die if their habitat, ie trees and water source are removed. Koalas range over a large territory and are territorial. The large males have their own specific areas while the young males roam across different areas. To appreciate this, you only have to listen to koalas as they sit up in their favourite trees and bellow to all that it is their place and watch out if you come this way (unless of course you are a cute female koala).

Relocating koalas would put not only the relocated koalas but also the resident population under stress also has there would be even more competition for territory. Koalas suffer significantly from such stress and the reduced availability of food. Koala populations are declining and to put the remaining population in peril is reckless in the extreme.

The Watermark area involved in the project is huge so there will be significant impact on koalas and other wildlife living in the area. As a result of the negative impact that the Watermark project will have on the habitat, water and native animals that live in this area I would ask that the commission take these factors into account and remember that your decision will determine whether a considerable number of animals live or die. This is probably the area of greatest

concentration of koalas in NSW; there is the potential for this mining activity to wipe out this population of koalas and push the species closer to extinction.

Martine Moran

26th of June 2014