

Presentation for Wambo Mod 17 PAC

Janet Fenwick, 7 December 2017

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Thankyou Commissioners, for the opportunity to speak today. We were disappointed you declined our invitation to visit our property to see the impacts of longwall mining. I have lived at Wambo for over 40 years, Ron a lot longer, and in that time have seen the damage, degradation and devaluation to our property, and the destruction of our permanent water supply, Wambo Creek. All of this is the result of underground mining. We were assured in 1989 that the property would be left no worse after mining. This has not happened!

Wambo Coal has been in operation for almost fifty years. If this modification is approved it will have been operating for over seventy years. This is a very long time!

As well as DA 305-7-2003 and DA 177-8-2004, Wambo Coal still operates under DA 108/91, approved by Singleton Council in February 1992. This fact was denied by the PAC for Mod 12 in November 2016. Condition 21 of DA 108/91 ensures Wambo Creek will be repaired and all water lost will be replaced in quality and quantity. We have been waiting for this to happen for over 20 years.

Wambo has not been compliant with many of their consent conditions, and though this is not for consideration by this PAC, you do need to be aware of it. Base line water monitoring was never done and well monitoring has not been done for over 10 years on our property.

Subsidence with longwall mining is a real problem, causing danger to domestic and native animals and to people, and possible damage to machinery. In the information presented by Wambo, the predictions only take into account the overall drop in the surface and do not investigate the possibility of deep holes and wide cracks.

Our property was undermined between 1989 and 2001. Cracks on the steeper slopes were over 5 metres deep and up to a metre wide. Repairs were done at the time, but new subsidence cracks and holes are still regularly appearing with no new mining in the last 16 years. None of the subsidence experts have been able to explain why this subsidence continues, except for one consultant suggesting it could be from continual de-watering of previous workings. We have been unable to get any details of the de-watering regime from Wambo.

If this modification is approved on the previously unmined 508 ha, it will require a lot of work to restore the land to its pre-mining use. With underground mining huge troughs are left across the land and drainage patterns are changed forever. Before mining this area was part of a viable mixed farming and grazing property. (This is evident from a previous EIS.)

Wambo has purchased a number of neighbouring properties in our vicinity over the last 3 decades. Sadly these properties have been neglected to the point where the fences are in a state of disrepair and there are huge subsidence holes throughout. This provides a risk if our cattle happen to get through the sub-standard fencing along our creek boundaries.

This modification is very close to the Wollemi National Park. Back in 1991 there was an “escarpment protection zone”, an area around the base of the cliffs where mining was prohibited. (This can be seen in figure 18, volume 2 EIS Expansion of Wambo Coal Mine, July 1991). What has happened with this?

“The Office of Environment and Heritage does not accept any any subsidence impacts in the Wollemi National Park.” (p 6) Visual monitoring of the cliff lines of the Wollomi Escarpment is all well and good, but if there is damage, what happens then? It is too late once there is a rock fall! It would be extremely difficult to repair damage on the cliffs and valleys. Remember the destruction in the Sugarloaf Conservation Area caused by repairs to subsidence from Glencore’s West Wallsend Colliery in August 2013. I have witnessed a rock fall on the escarpment in January, 2013. The scar is still visible today. Maybe it is the result of mining? Who will ever know!

The cumulative effects of mining on water need to be addressed. Any loss of water is unacceptable. Once water is lost it is not coming back. We have seen this in the past and it will continue.

Please stop the destruction now and reject this modification.