

Stephen Lowcock

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28 October 2014

Submission of Objection

Dubbo Zirconia Project

Application No: SSD-5251

I am a concerned resident of Dubbo and wish to voice my objection to the proposed Dubbo Zirconia Project (DZP) on the grounds outlined below. I am 53 years of age and a full-time employee of a local trade contractor. I am an active volunteer member of a local bushcare group engaged in maintaining the health of the Macquarie River and its riparian zone, and wish to make it clear that group did not have any involvement in this submission - I am objecting purely from a personal perspective. I am also an active catch-and-release angler. Over the 22 years I have lived in Dubbo I have been involved in numerous community volunteer and sporting capacities.

My son and his partner have recently returned to Dubbo to live and are expecting their first child in the new year. I am gravely concerned for the health of both current and future generations and believe due consideration needs to be given to the longer term effects of mining radioactive ores for short term benefit.

My objections to the DZP include:

- Excessive chemical introduction & application within the local community;
- Dispersal of radioactive particles through blasting, extraction and processing;
 - In particular the dispersal by wind of radon gas which, despite DZP's assertions, is a carcinogenic cancer-causing agent.

- Excessive water use and potential for preferential treatment to DZP in water allocations during periods of drought and low water availability;
 - We know the value of water in dry temperate climate zones, and the necessity for clean, reliable water supply to meet the immediate human needs of local communities for drinking water, together with our need to sustain food production. Given the economic implications, it's easy to foresee DZP pursuing priority allocations. It's simply not worth risking.
- Expected and potential impacts on endangered fauna species;
 - The EIS provides little or no certainty for the ongoing survival of the endangered Pink-tailed Worm Lizard at this site. It also pays scant regard to the potential for the destruction of the immediate riverine system in the event of discharge of chemical or radioactive agents into the Wambangalang Creek and Macquarie River, and subsequent damage to the Macquarie Marshes and the Barwon/Darling river system. Every native inhabitant of these systems will be jeopardised, including insects, crustaceans and fish species including the endangered Trout Cod. We as concerned citizens fight hard to maintain the habitats of all endemic species. One accident at this mine site could destroy their environment permanently. I am aware that Alkane Resources has in recent years been involved with State Government bodies in re-snagging sections of the Macquarie River by providing suitable timber snags from land clearance at its Tomingley mine, and applaud their efforts in this regard. I have my suspicions though that this has simply been an effort to placate the Dubbo community and in particular local environment groups.
- Absence of economic benefit to the majority of local residents;
 - There has been no relevant benefit cost analysis done by Alkane Resources, despite the requirements of the NSW State Government. I would suggest this is a reflection of the expected gross discrepancy between what ordinary citizens will receive and the windfalls that await a very small minority of local business people and elected representatives (I understand that five Dubbo City Counsellors own shares in Alkane Resources). There will be no benefits for the vast majority of Dubbo residents, just the potential for adverse health risks.
- Absence of employment opportunities for local residents;
 - I am aware Alkane Resources have indicated a preference for sourcing local labour for this project, including the possible recruitment of indigenous staff, and hope they are true to their word. I am also aware the unemployment rate in the mining community is roughly double the rest of the economy, providing Alkane Resources with access to an already trained and accredited workforce of which very little will include Dubbo district residents.

- Excessive potential for contamination of on-site and surrounding land;
 - Dust, run-off, leaks are all potential hazards for land contamination in the area.
- Excessive potential for contamination of both ground and surface water;
 - We know from experience that accidents happen, as evidenced by the leakage of toxic materials at the Ranger Uranium Mine in the Northern Territory in December 2013. This is only the latest in a history of mishaps or sheer neglect by miners. The contamination rehabilitation programs ongoing in Malaysia are a sad reminder of miscalculations by mining companies, including Australian companies.
- The lack of transparency by Alkane Resources concerning their longer term objectives with the Toongi site.
 - The decision by the NSW Government in 2012 to overturn the ban on uranium exploration in NSW is only a harbinger of future uranium mining in the state (the Government have admitted as much). Alkane Resources explored the Toongi site for uranium before they applied to mine rare earth elements at the site. The site is at the moment the largest uranium deposit in NSW. Alkane Resources have indicated a 20 year mine life extracting some 19.5 million tonnes of ore. They have also indicated to the stock market that the site contains over 70 million tonnes of ore. I expect they will mine uranium at this site as soon as the NSW Government gives the go ahead, and I do not believe they will walk away after extracting less than a third of the mineral wealth of the site.
- Lack of planning to deal with road maintenance & accidents.
 - DZP proposes to enter into a Voluntary Agreement with Dubbo City Council for maintenance of Obley & Toongi Roads. Given the heavy vehicle traffic to be generated by the mine, I don't believe the ordinary ratepayers of Dubbo should be required to supplement DZP for road maintenance. The average ratepayer will not obtain financial benefit from the mine & should not be required to fund part of its operation. Further, much of the heavy vehicle traffic will be travelling on Yarrandale Rd, Boothenbah Rd and the Newell Highway through Dubbo city before accessing Obley Rd, which will increase maintenance costs for these roads. DZP have not proposed to meet any of these costs. Nor has adequate planning been made to deal with accidents by these vehicles and likely chemical spillages on any of the public roads mentioned.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours faithfully

Stephen Lowcock