

Independent Planning Commission of NSW

[ipcn@ipcn.nsw.gov.au](mailto:ipcn@ipcn.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Commissioners

**SUBMISSION RE: BYLONG VALLEY COAL MINE**

I recently addressed the Commission at the public hearing held in Mudgee on 7 November 2018 and I wish to reiterate my objection to the proposed Bylong Valley coal mine.

The public hearing was very illuminating.

A number of speakers addressed water issues. It was submitted that there is insufficient water in the Bylong Valley to support the mine. Water licenses have historically been vastly over allocated. Just because Kepco has purchased water licenses it does not mean the water is there. Farmers have, in the past, agreed amongst themselves who would pump from their bores when so as not to run ground water reserves dry through over extraction. The level of extraction by the mine and the impact on ground water systems will possibly eliminate all agricultural activity in the Valley. Estimates of ground water lost on entering the mine works cannot be relied upon when similar estimates for other mines in the Mudgee area have been understated by 500%.

A reasonable person would conclude that the mine should not proceed based on water issues alone.

However, on top of the water problems the public hearing shone light on:

- The economic loss in perpetuity of significant agricultural output
- The destruction and fracturing of the Bylong Valley community
- The adverse environmental impact of coal trains of coal trains moving to and from the Port of Newcastle
- The traffic and road safety impacts on residents between the Bylong Valley and Mudgee
- Environmental impacts affecting threatened species
- The inevitable damage to heritage listed Tarwyn Park, which will lose its significance as a demonstration site for Natural Sequence Farming, once water systems in the Valley are disrupted.
- The economics of the proposal are highly dubious
- The unconscionable addition to Australia's greenhouse gas emissions at a time when the IPCC is issuing ever more dire warnings that humanity has limited time to substantially reduce emissions.

Adding these arguments, against the proposal, to the water issues would leave a reasonable person beyond doubt that the proposal should not proceed.

However, there are even more fundamental reasons why the proposal should not proceed.

In my address to the Commissioners I chose to focus on the basic principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD).

The Bylong Valley Coal Mine is not an Ecologically Sustainable Development.

The NSW Protection of the Environment Act 1991 – Section 6(2) defines ESD. It requires that:

- The Precautionary Principle should be applied
- Irreversible damage to the environment should be avoided
- The present generation should ensure the health, diversity and productivity of the environment are maintained for the benefit of future generations
- Those who generate pollution and waste should bear the cost of containment, avoidance or abatement

**The proposal to mine coal in the Bylong Valley contravenes all 4 of these tests of ESD.**

In my address to the Commissioners I also used the example of rising sea levels to illustrate the catastrophic impacts that climate change will have if steps are not taken to reduce emissions immediately.

The latest IPCC Reports tells us, if want to maintain a liveable environment and limit warming to 1.5 degrees:

1. Emissions need to be reduced by 45%, on 2010 levels by 2030, and;
2. Emissions need to be reduced to net zero by 2050.

Rather than falling, Australia's emissions have increased in each of the last 3 years. Australia needs to rapidly reduce its emissions. When the impact of coal exports is considered Australia is a major emitter of greenhouse gases. Australia needs to act to reduce emissions and reduce coal extraction.

We have already seen the effect of 1 degree of global warming. We experience increased temperatures, lower rainfall, longer and more serious droughts. We are seeing storms of increasing ferocity. Sea levels are rising and will inundate coastal areas. The great river deltas – the most fertile and productive food growing areas of the world will be inundated and destroyed.

Just one of these deltas, the **Ganges-Brahmaputra Delta**, which makes up much of Bangladesh, is home to an estimated 125 to 143 million people. Parts of the delta are already being affected by saltwater intrusion. A sea level rise of only half a metre will displace an estimated 6 million people. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ganges\\_Delta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ganges_Delta))

This is one delta of many around the world that will be destroyed by rising sea levels. Hundreds of millions of people will be displaced.

Climate change is literally a deadly serious issue. The NSW Department of Planning has to stop ignoring the issue of Climate Change. The Bylong Valley Coal mine, if allowed to proceed would produce an estimated 200 million tonnes of greenhouse gases, in CO2 equivalents. It is proposed the mine would be producing coal up until 2044. These additional greenhouse gases and the timeline are completely out of step with the direction the IPCC tells us we need to go to avoid climate change disaster.

I understand that the members of the Independent Planning Commission are required to consider social and economic factors as well as environmental factors – the triple bottom line.

Approximately, one third of the people who addressed the IPC Commissioners in Mudgee spoke in favour of the mine. However, without exception all supporters of the proposal focussed on possible short term economic gains and failed to address any other issue.

I submit that in practise the triple bottom line concept is fatally flawed. Time and again a so called 'balance' is achieved by condoning environmental damage in exchange for short term profits and for short duration jobs.

NSW Department of Planning, in approving the Bylong Valley coal mine, has completely ignored the principles of ESD. Rather than all of the issues, the plusses and the minuses and the principles of ESD having been weighed and a balance having been achieved the Department's approval of this project is completely and utterly unbalanced and flawed.

**We have to stop sacrificing the environment. Continuing to sacrifice the environment is directly counter to the principle of intergenerational equity.**

**There is no way the proponent of this development can mitigate or offset the damage the project will do in terms of greenhouse gas emissions. Approving this proposal would be counter to the principle of polluter pays.**

**The proposed project, through greenhouse gas emissions, would cause irreversible damage to the environment.**

**The Precautionary Principle should be applied.**

It is absolutely crystal clear that **Object 1.3** of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act is **NOT** met by the proposal. The Department of Planning's Final Assessment Report is a travesty.

Approval of this project would be directly counter to the principles of ESD as stated in the Protection of the Environment Administration Act.

I urge the members of the Independent Planning Commission:

- To apply the principles of ESD,
- To acknowledge the extreme environmental damage done by coal mining through its affect on our climate,
- To acknowledge all of the other compelling environmental, economic and social reasons the proposal should not proceed, and,
- To reject the proposal to mine coal in the Bylong Valley.

Yours faithfully

Barry Hadaway

[REDACTED] Budgee, 2850

[REDACTED]