

I live in a mining affected community, BULGA. We have been fighting the expansion of coal mines for more than 5 years...and with some success.

However, successive changes in government regulation have stripped us of power to fight back.

Successive changes of policy have put all the power in the hands of the mining companies aided and abetted by the Department of Planning.

Finally with the removal of corrupt previous Ministers and Premier we have a new Planning Minister who is on the track of restoring balance.

This "Integrated Mining Policy" was proposed before Rob Stokes became Planning Minister and hopefully he will rescind this and start again with a more balanced approach.

Mining affected communities around the state are demanding reform and protection. The government has been fiddling around the edges while project after project is approved with worsening impacts on farmland, bushland, rivers, aquifers, air quality and the rural landscape.

The standardised assessment requirements and application guidelines of this "Integrated Mining Policy" narrow the scope of Environmental Impact Statements and continue the Department of Planning's push to relax environmental conditions to make it easier for mining to go ahead and damn the surrounding communities – human and ecological.

- Cumulative impacts,
- Matters of national environmental significance,
- Detail on social impact guidelines
- Greenhouse gases

These are some of the major matters missing from the standardised assessment requirements.

The standard assessment requirements do not match the statutory benchmarks in s79C of the EP and A Act and Part 3 of the Mining SEPP.

The "Mining Application guideline" acknowledges that set-back distances are needed to protect rural industries, but leaves these to the mining company to establish by buying up buffering farmland. This is not acceptable, the setback distances need to be defined and adhered to.

Coastal upland swamps are unique, *in situ*, irreplaceable environmental values. They cannot in any way be "offset" - impacts on them must be avoided at all costs.

After more than 5 years of battling an expanding coalmine, I have absolutely no faith that the Dept. of Planning is serving the Public interest in its treatment of mining applications. Over the years we have been lied to and deceived time after time by the mining company, aided and abetted by the Dept. of Planning.

I, for one, do not want the Department of Planning to introduce standardised conditions for coal mines, as it is patently clear to me that the Department is serving its own interests (whatever they may be) to the detriment of the public interest.

The environmental situation now is critical:

- Air quality thresholds are regularly breached,
- Water is leaking from rivers into mining pits,
- Sydney's drinking water dams are threatened,
- Major rural industries are threatening to leave the Hunter,
- Mining has been approved on floodplains next to the richest farmland in the state,
- Woodland communities and wildlife are being pushed to regional extinction

All this under a planning system which has been unfair, unbalanced and worsening over the last few years.

I welcome the recently proposed Mining SEPP amendment from Planning Minister Stokes as a first small step to restoring balance as we have become fed up with waiting for the government to deliver promises for meaningful change.

We are **still waiting** for:

- Triple bottom line Coal Exploration guidelines,
- Water Sharing Plan for hard rock aquifers on the North Coast,
- Upper Hunter Strategic Assessment,
- Promised economic assessment guideline, the Industrial noise policy review,
- Cumulative impact assessment and policy on mine voids
- Cumulative impact assessment and policy on water impacts
- Social impact guidelines,
- Implementation of the no-go areas that were implicitly promised as part of the Strategic Regional Land Use Plan.

By the end of 2015 I would like to see the Government :

- With respect to **the Mining SEPP**
 - Remove the non-discretionary standards clause (s12AB) that prevents the Planning and Assessment Commission rejecting proposals that meet minimalist noise and dust thresholds.
 - Create statutory set-backs that protect critical industry clusters, productive farmland, villages, rivers, productive groundwater and the Special Areas of Sydney's drinking water catchment from further coal mining.
- With respect to the content of **the required EIS**
Include in the economic assessment the economic impacts of externalities such as
 - health costs to the taxpayer directly attributed to coal production and transport
 - costs to the taxpayer of remediating voids left behind by mining companies
 - costs of global warming caused by CO2 emissions from the consumed coal
 - costs to the taxpayer of infrastructure costs such as rail transport
- **Restore third party merit appeal rights** for the public to appeal bad mining approvals as recommended by ICAC.
- Remove the unfair **Land Acquisition Policy** that prevents the Planning and Assessment Commission from delivering justice for people suffering the impacts of mining and unable to move or sell.

- Remove the **Major Projects Offset Policy** which has abandoned important like-for-like principles and safeguards for our vanishing bushland and wildlife.
- Deliver the triple bottom line assessment for new coal exploration leases as recommended by ICAC and stop issuing new exploration areas until the adoption of new guidelines is complete.
- Deliver a Water Sharing Plan for the hard rock aquifer groundwater that has been removed in huge volumes by the mining industry in the Hunter, and cap extraction at a sustainable level.
- Firmly protect and prevent any further clearing of critically endangered woodlands and habitat for vanishing wildlife through the Upper Hunter Strategic Assessment.
- Conduct a **cumulative impact assessment** of the impact of open cut mining on water resources in the Hunter Valley, including the promised review and new policy on final voids, and stop approving mine expansions until this is complete.
- Independently accredit specialist experts who contribute to all mining environmental assessments and ensure that each “expert” report is peer reviewed.
- Impose load-based licencing limits on the air and water pollution of coal mines.
- Introduce stronger limits on noise pollution and air pollution through proper community consultation resulting in a finalised Industrial noise policy review and the Commonwealth air quality NEPM variation

This “Integrated Mining Policy falls a long way short of what should reasonably be required to protect the environment and the community from unnecessary impacts.

My view?

It should be scrapped, and a new working group convened, comprised of representatives of ALL stake holders and impacted parties, including mining companies, communities, Dept. of Planning, EPA, OEH, NSW Health etc., given the ability to call upon expert testimony and external consultation, with the aim of building a policy framework that is workable and fair to all.

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