

“Reclaiming our Valley”

Hunter Communities Network

PO Box 14 Singleton 2330

Director
Resources Policy
Department of Planning and Environment
PO Box 39
Sydney NSW 2001

Thursday 14 December 2017

Submission to Proposed Jerry’s Plains open cut mining prohibition

The Hunter Communities Network is an alliance of community based groups and individuals impacted by the current coal industry and concerned about the ongoing rapid expansion of coal and coal seam gas exploration and mining in the region.

We welcome the proposal by Department of Planning and Environment to prohibit open cut mining in the Jerry’s Plains area under the State Environmental Planning Policy (Mining, Petroleum Production and Extractive Industries) 2007 (Mining SEPP) Schedule 1.

However, we do not support that only the shallow coal measures are included in this prohibition. We consider that the deeper measures must also be included to prevent ongoing impacts on water sources in this area of the Hunter Valley.

We consider that the proposed Malabar and Spur Hill underground mines will have significant cumulative impact on the alluvial aquifer systems attached to the Hunter River and cause subsidence on Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land (BSAL).

The Gateway Panel identified significant issues with the Spur Hill proposal in that it failed to meet nine of the assessment criteria. These included impacts on BSAL and Critical Industry Clusters (CIC).

The cumulative impact of mining on prime agricultural land and associated aquifer systems in the Mid to Upper Hunter has been significant.

This was demonstrated in the DPI Water Mid Hunter Groundwater Study 2015 that gave a broad indication of the extent of draw down in the Hunter as a result of mining operations. The area of mine pits in the study area was found to be 148 square km. A generalised buffer of 4km around all the mine pit areas was taken as the area of potential drawdown to 2m or greater – giving a total area experiencing this effect of 977 square km.

The area of alluvial water sources overlying the >2 m drawdown impact zone was calculated at 123 square km.

Hunter Communities Network considers that the current cumulative impact on water sources and farming land in the Hunter Region is already too great.

The proposed prohibition in the Mining SEPP must include all coal seams in the Jerry's Plains area and a broader protection of BSAL and CIC lands as mapped in the Upper Hunter Strategic Regional Land Use Plan.

This is the only approach that will prevent future land use conflict.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "B. Smiles". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a large 'B' and a long, sweeping 'S'.

Bev Smiles
bevsmiles@bigpond.com