



Protect the Gardens of Stone

“Say NO to open cut mining!”



Friday 9th September 2011

MEDIA RELEASE: For immediate release

“Department says Coalpac’s Environmental Assessment inadequate”

The NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure has deemed the Environmental Assessment for the ‘Coalpac Consolidation Project’ proposal inadequate for public exhibition. Environment groups around the state have highlighted multiple inadequacies with the project proposal and are adamant the assessment process will see the project rejected entirely.

The Project site is located in the Ben Bullen State Forest, the western gateway to the Gardens of Stone. If the proposal is approved, over 1000 hectares of mainly old-growth forest and the wildlife habitat of at least 32 native animal and 350 native plant species, will disappear.

“Despite the suite of technical studies Coalpac Pty Ltd provided, the Department of Planning and Infrastructure have deemed its Environmental Assessment inadequate for public exhibition,” says Justin McKee, Gardens of Stone Campaigner for the Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

“The Blue Mountains Conservation Society is not surprised the Department doesn’t think Coalpac’s material is up to scratch. We recently called for an independent flora assessment into the ‘Coalpac Consolidation Project’, among other things, due to the company’s track record of submitting inadequate reports. In effect, the ecological surveys presented understated the diversity of the area to be open cut.

“Lithgow City Council recently acknowledged the company hadn’t addressed the Director General’s Requirements also and rejected the proposal.

“What is under threat is an iconic natural area. Environment groups around the state are lobbying to ensure the Ben Bullen State Forest is protected in full. We are not alone. The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (now within the Office of Environment and Heritage) has acknowledged its wish to see the forest placed in the conservation reserve system as a matter of priority.

“The Ben Bullen State Forest straddles the Great Dividing Range and is a scenically and biologically diverse area of outstanding natural and recreational value. Local residents have seen first-hand how open-cut mining has scarred parts of their surrounding environment and acknowledge that rehabilitation really can’t put it right.

“Coalpac will now have time to address the items the Department has deemed inadequate and get that material up to standard. In the mean time, we will continue our campaign to have this proposal rejected.

“The natural and recreational values of the area have a life span well beyond the 21 years Coalpac would take to destroy it. We are confident the threats to matters of national environmental significance identified within the full assessment process would see the proposal be rejected by the NSW Government,” concludes Mr McKee.

Concerned residents are invited to write letters at <http://nccnsw.org.au/content/protect-gardens-stone> or by post to Justin McKee C/- P.O. Box 29, Wentworth Falls, 2782 for forwarding.

Media Contact: Justin McKee - 0404 824 020

C/- Blue Mountains Conservation Society – P.O. Box 29 WENTWORTH FALLS NSW 2782

www.bluemountains.org.au