



Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc

ABN 38 686 119 087

PO Box 29 Wentworth Falls NSW 2782

Phone: (02) 4757 1872

E-Mail: bmcs@bluemountains.org.au Web Site: www.bluemountains.org.au

Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow

May 31, 2015

Mr Brian Gilligan, Chair
Planning Assessment Commission
GPO Box 3415
Sydney NSW 2001

By email: pac@pac.nsw.gov.au

Supplementary Comment Springvale Mine Extension Project [SMEP]

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society previously indicated that it might wish to add supplementary comment following the nature of inputs at the Public Hearing. The Society is now doing this and hopes that, although acknowledging the PAC is not bound to receive the comments, you will decide to consider them.

The Society would like to submit and emphasise the following:

1. Under no circumstances is the Society advocating mine-closure. The numerous submissions predicting the consequences of mine-closure are valid but largely irrelevant in the context of what opposing submissions were saying. Without impugning the integrity and supporters' belief in what was said, it should be noted that, with few exceptions, they worked for the mine and their views were dominated by what it would mean to them personally; this was usually followed by what it would mean to Lithgow as an extension of their personal impacts.

Although never mentioned, Lithgow has lost many industries over the years and the mining sector is now contracting. As China and other countries (India, Japan, Korea, etc) feel pressure on their economies, new contracts will favour the major lower-cost open-cut mines and Lithgow will be increasingly under threat. Lithgow should now be repositioning its dependence on coal, but despite the Mayor's statements about diversification, there has been no sign of treating the issue seriously.

2. **The thrust of what was presented to the Public Hearing is that Springvale has the capacity to ensure better environmental outcomes.** The DPE's Assessment Report, instead of pursuing such outcomes has elected to leave the matters effectively unresolved. The Society believes that the PAC should recommend that the details of what Springvale **must** do to ensure minimal environmental risk should be resolved in advance of any approval to proceed. Leaving resolution of the Coxs R issues to negotiations between the EPA and the Company is not satisfactory. Likewise, leaving adjustments to

LW-panel length and width should not be solely left to the Company, which sees any such change an imposition on its cost per tonne mined.

It is rational for the Company to attempt to maximise its financial benefit; it is the role of environmental organizations to ensure that this does not disproportionately impact on the natural environment.

3. Much emphasis has been placed on Mt Piper's need for Springvale's Coal as a function of proximity and cost per tonne. Yet Energy Australia (EA) similarly argued that coal from Coalpac was fundamental to its operations. The simple fact is that EA and Springvale are commercial operations which should be able to reach **a mutually beneficial price structure**. If their mutual acceptable solution is to further damage the local environment, then they need to re-think priorities and seek savings by investigating their own operational deficiencies.
4. Although the export coal-price is a major factor in mine-closures (or 'care and maintenance' decisions), Springvale has surely factored this into its decision to extend the mine. In doing so, it would have been totally aware of the environmental resistance relating to high-risk mining beneath nationally endangered Newnes Plateau Shrub Swamps and Hanging Swamps; and also to polluting the Coxs River system. Centennial has clearly made a conscious decision to push beyond what is in any way environmentally acceptable. **It has done this knowing that whatever it gets away with will involve negligible cost and be disproportionately reflected in its bottom line. The Society emphasises that this tactic is understandable in the context of company ethics, but hopes that the PAC is not prepared to subscribe to such behaviour.**
5. The Society notes that Mr Austen criticised the integrity and/or competence of what he called "*A self-appointed group of dogmatic and arrogant elitists*" and described as "*...distorting some information and withholding other material to suit their own objectives*" and "*...supposed scientific presentation...*"

The society would not normally respond to the arrant nonsense that was in Mr Austen's submission, but most certainly takes issue with the tone of what was said, and the few 'factual' comments made.

- Springvale's own consultant (Jacobs engineering) advised the extent of the anticipated salinity-increase in L Bullagorang; the consultant also suggested ways in which the fully recognised impacts of the LDP 009 discharges could be ameliorated. Nothing presented by Dr Wright and others (including the EPA and OEH) is denied by Centennial and anyone with appropriate integrity and capacity to read facts.
 - Lakes Wallace and Lyell are far from the pristine waters implied by Mr Austen. They are highly saline and contain disproportionate levels of undesirable metallic elements. The overflow from Lake Lyell continues to pollute as it moves on down the Coxs River. The increased salinity-impact of the proposed discharges on Lake Bullagorang (as determined by Jacobs engineering – Springvale's consultant) are not figments of the opponents' imaginations.
 - Had Mr Austen taken the trouble to read any of the material submitted by OEH and Ditton Geotechnical Services Pty Ltd, any of the history of swamp-damage such as Goldney et al's report to the Commonwealth Government which resulted in the \$1.45 million enforceable undertaking, and the DoE's approved extraction of LWs 415-417 being subject to LW mining not be undertaken directly below known high quality swamps, he would perhaps realise that his beliefs are homespun and against the collective knowledge of many professionals.
6. In conclusion, the Society wishes to point out that the consultants offering opposing views to the PAC, either made personal presentations or were not paid professional rates by the Society or anyone in the Gardens of Stone Alliance. They provided submissions and made presentations because of their real concerns about what is being proposed.

Furthermore, it should be appreciated that whereas Mr Muir is a paid Director of the Colong Foundation and Ms Barham is employed by the Nature Conservation Council, other presenters such

as Mr Jonkers, Ms Maclean, Dr Stiles, Ms Upton and me are entirely volunteers. Certainly in the case of the Society, we do not even claim travel money to attend the hearings. We contrast this with the circumstances relating to Andrew Muir and the Mayor, and the majority of those providing personal supporting presentations

The Society appreciates the opportunity to provide these supplementary comments.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brian Marshall', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

***Dr Brian Marshall,
For the Management Committee.***