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Submission Opposing Coal Exploration in the Rylstone Area

I am writing to you on behalf of the Central West Environment Council (CWEC) to express our opposition to continued coal exploration in the Rylstone Area. CWEC is an alliance of fourteen environmental groups representing districts throughout the Central West. Many of our member groups continue to have issues with mining in their local areas. We are of the collective opinion that coal exploration is unnecessary given the inexorable transition to renewable alternatives and a growing understanding that the burning of fossil fuels is unacceptable environmentally.

Last week the IPCC released its sixth report on global emissions. The report contained a dire warning that we must cease burning fossil fuels at our earliest opportunity if we are to avoid catastrophic global warming. It is therefore totally inappropriate to explore for more fossil fuel sources when expert opinion strongly recommends they stay in the ground.

Coal mining has a catastrophic effect on water sources. In a country that is constantly under the threat of drought, we need to protect all water sources, not only in terms of supply, but also in terms of water quality. The Rylstone-Kandos area lies at the headwaters of a major catchment in the Murray Darling system. The Cudgegong River, Lawson Creek and Cox's Creek are sources of water supply for the townships of Rylstone, Kandos and Mudgee. Coal mining has the potential to disrupt aquifers and increase polluted runoff entering these streams.

Coalmining operations have in the past destroyed small rural communities. An example of such is the complete destruction of the community of Wollar by the extension of the Wilpinjong coal mine. It is indefensible to destroy a rural community to establish a coal mine. Especially in the current economic climate, which predicts a downturn in the coal industry worldwide.

As well as causing community annihilation, such projects have the capacity to divide communities such as has happened in Rylstone and Kandos because of the now defunct Bylong mine proposal. This process has been repeated in other areas in the Upper Hunter and Mudgee district. We must not allow proposals to proceed that put corporate profits before people.

Kandos and Rylstone have successfully established an eco-tourism industry which allows economic benefit and environmental sustainability to coexist. Areas which support this industry are Wollemi National Park, Fern Tree Gully and Ganguddy (Dunn's Swamp). Many new residents in the area have small tourism businesses, B&Bs, small scale camping and restaurants. The introduction of the coal industry into this economic mix could ruin a sustainable industry as well as the local environment.

There is an abundance of wildlife, including many rare and threatened species in uncleared areas in the district, including the platypus, which has been sighted in the Cudgegong River at Rylstone. Also abundant are mammals such as wombats, echidnas as well as birdlife, which attracts birders from all over Australia. Should coal exploration result in the establishment of a coal industry in the region, the biodiversity of the area, along with its economic benefits, will be put at risk.

NSW Government policy has indicated a clear commitment to renewable energy through its establishment of renewable energy hubs. It would appear to be a contravention of this policy to sanction any exploration for fossils fuels. Our government needs to focus on developing renewable infrastructure and staying true to its commitment to moving away from coal.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cilla Kinross". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Cilla Kinross
President,
Central West Environment Council