

# Wilpinjong PAC Submission Key Points - Objection

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[http://www.lockthegate.org.au/save\\_wollar\\_from\\_wilpinjong\\_coal\\_mine](http://www.lockthegate.org.au/save_wollar_from_wilpinjong_coal_mine)

Wilpinjong Coal Mine is in the western coalfields near Mudgee. It is owned by Peabody Energy and has been operating with continuous expansion since 2006. The impacts of noise and dust have caused most of the population of the Wollar district to sell up and leave. The mine has caused significant social, ecological and Aboriginal cultural heritage damage along with the two large neighbouring coal mines.

This latest expansion proposal has been strongly opposed by the local community, including the local Aboriginal community and the broader community of NSW.

## 1. A long-term strategic plan for the western coalfields is required, but does not yet exist

In its Review Report, the NSW PAC said that the *“development of a high level strategic vision for the NSW coalfields, and in particular for the western coalfields would be of considerable benefit in the assessment of individual projects”*.

A final decision on this project must be halted until the Review PAC recommendation to develop a 'high level strategic vision' for coal mining near Mudgee, and NSW more broadly, is conducted so that cumulative impacts of multiple mining projects in the area can be properly accounted for.

The NSW PAC suggests that without this *“important”* plan, *“mining companies, government agencies, investors and the community”* will not have confidence *“in the long term strategic direction of mining within the State.”*

**Further information:** Section 7.1 Strategic vision of mining, [Wilpinjong Extension Project NSW PAC Review report, December 2016](#), pg 31

## 2. Cultural heritage destruction of the Rocky Hill Complex ochre quarry and art site will be significant. It must be protected from mining.

230 indigenous cultural heritage sites will be impacted by this proposal. In Pit 8, 3 sites of *“high significance”* will be destroyed. These include:

- a rock shelter with artefacts and art
- a cultural area associated with the landscape features which comprise a visually prominent hill top situated in the valley floor
- a rock shelter with artefacts and an ochre quarry.

The Department of Planning has failed to implement a recommendation of the Review PAC to undertake further consultation with the local Aboriginal community:

*“that the Department, OEH and the Applicant take all reasonable steps to consult, and where possible reach an agreement with the local Aboriginal community as to the level of acceptable impacts on items of significance.”*

The local Aboriginal community objections have been ignored. In their Final Assessment Report, NSW Planning stated that they had accepted all of the NSW PAC’s recommendations where relevant *“with the exception of one about further consultation with the Aboriginal community.”*

**Further information:** Section 9.1 Commission’s Consolidated Recommendations, [Wilpinjong Extension Project NSW PAC Review report, December 2016](#), pg 33

**3. Social impacts on remaining Wollar residents will be significant and have not been mitigated sufficiently by the current proposal**

In their Review Report, the NSW PAC said that it *“acknowledges the community’s concerns over the decline of Wollar Village and how negative impacts of the mine have contributed to its decline.”*

Social impacts include:

- isolation, stranded assets, loss of connections in the village and increased threat during natural and vehicle accident emergencies
- no assessment of Low Frequency Noise (LFN) emissions propagated by Wilpinjong Mine either currently or for the proposed expansion
- no assessment of PM2.5 emissions on human health.

The significant social impacts on remaining Wollar district residents have not been addressed by Department of Planning or the Review PAC. The proposed Social Impact Management Plan does not mitigate current impacts. Remaining residents have been economically disadvantaged and should be offered acquisition rights.

**4. The PAC note that *“due to the significant amount of surface disturbance associated with the proposal”* this mine expansion will impact threatened and endangered biodiversity.**

Biodiversity threatened by this expansion includes:

- an endangered ecological community of Blakelys Red Gum and Yellow Box Woodland
- a threatened flora species called *Ozothamnus tessellatus*
- up to 38 threatened fauna species including via disturbance of 190 ha of critically endangered Regent Honeyeater habitat and 160 ha of Koala habitat.

The proposed biodiversity offsets to not meet current NSW policy:

- Loss of critically endangered habitat must be offset with like-for-like
- Steps must be taken to find like-for-like offsets before supplementary measures (paying into a fund) can be used – they are a last resort
- More than half the offset credits for the Wilpinjong Extension are on mine rehabilitation – untested and highly uncertain biodiversity outcomes

**Further information:** Section 6.1 Biodiversity and Offsets, [Wilpinjong Extension Project NSW PAC Review report, December 2016](#), pg 10

**5. All final voids must be completely backfilled. Peabody Energy has reneged on 2.7b rehabilitation commitments in US.**

The current proposal allows pits 2 and 6 to become saline lakes. The formation of saline lakes is not an acceptable outcome.

A June 2016 report entitled [The Hole Truth](#) describes the problem thus:

***Regulatory failure leaves an expensive mess for future generations***

*One responsibility of regulators is long-term custodianship for the land, yet they have allowed mining companies to leave a polluting and pockmarked landscape for future generations. Continued regulatory failure and flawed assessment processes are permitting considerable swathes of NSW to be rendered into ugly, vast, saline lakes.*

**6. The proposed conditions of consent are not stringent.**

Many have caveats such as ‘*unless the Secretary agrees otherwise*’. This allows the condition to be changed after approval. Do not agree with Department of Planning that the project is approvable because the proposed conditions are very flexible and do not provide certainty.

**7. Climate Change impacts from the production of more than 337Mt of CO2-e over the life of the project are too great and have not been adequately considered.**

In total, the mining of and combustion of coal mined at Wilpinjong will produce 348Mt CO2-e. This is significantly more than double an entire year’s emissions for NSW (130Mt in 2014).

Early in November the NSW Government released a Climate Change Policy Framework setting a broad commitment for zero emissions by 2050.

Also in November the Federal Government ratified the Paris Agreement to restrict global temperatures to below a 2 degrees C increase, with efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5o C.

This is a legally binding international treaty.