



# Sutherland Shire Environment Centre

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Sutherland Shire Environment Centre is a not-for-profit community organisation that has been actively involved in advocating for the environment since 1991. On behalf of our members we are writing to oppose the proposed Hawkins-Rumker 'coal release area'.

The NSW government has been undertaking a number of positive measures as part of it's NSW Energy Roadmap initiatives. We have been horrified to discover all the emissions reductions achieved as a result of these innovative measures are being wiped out by continued reliance on outdated, polluting technology. Recently approved coal and gas projects have combined scope 1 and 2 emissions equal to all savings from the NSW Renewable Energy Infrastructure Roadmap.

Australia's annual emissions are now approximately 528 million tonnes of carbon dioxide. If the Hawkins-Rumker 'coal release area' is mined it will release four times that amount - 2.2 billion tonnes. This is unacceptable. We should not be sacrificing our land, and climate to an aging, polluting industry.

Earlier this week Australian steel making giant Bluescope announced it was committed to a net zero emissions target for its scope 1 and scope 2 emissions, and will focus on longer term solutions such as green hydrogen.<sup>1</sup> Andrew "Twiggy" Forrest has announced Fortesque will be moving to green hydrogen supplied by renewables by 2023, and has said that coal's days are "either over or numbered". He is investing \$1 billion in new technology and building a hydrogen fuelled power station at Port Kembla.<sup>2</sup>

Enough is enough. We are at a tipping point when it comes to risks from climate change. Economic growth may be cited as the rationale for approving the Hawkins-Rumker 'coal release area', but the horrific 2019-20 bushfires have shown we cannot afford this retrograde, destructive industry.

We have seen other problems associated with the industry - and costs to the taxpayer which are not fully accounted for. As the NSW Independent Expert Panel into Mining in the Catchment recently found, remediation of contamination as a result of coal mining can be required in perpetuity.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-08-16/bluescope-posts-profit-and-reveal-carbon-plan/100381020>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.afr.com/policy/energy-and-climate/forrest-willing-to-fund-1b-green-power-station-in-nsw-20210315-p57axg>

The impact of pollution from mining operations can become far worse after mining ceases, as was found in 2017 following the closure of Berrima Colliery, when contaminated water from that mine entered Wingecarribee River.<sup>3</sup>

We do not need yet another coal mine adjacent to a World Heritage area. We have already seen the damage and contamination here as a result of mining activity. In 2015 a mine tunnel collapse at Clarence Colliery caused contamination in the Blue Mountains World Heritage area.<sup>4</sup> Subsequently discharge from the mine resulted in serious ecological damage to the Wollangambe River, even 22kms downstream, turning parts of the river into an “ecological desert”.<sup>5</sup>

The potential for negative impacts on biodiversity, ecosystems and environmental values are too great a risk for this project to proceed. There are nationally listed threatened species in these areas: critically endangered Regent Honeyeaters, endangered Spotted-tailed Quoll and Glossy Black-Cockatoos. Endangered flora, and features of the landscape such as swamps, bogs, rivulets and creeks will be exposed to pollution for mining, and destroyed if open cut mining takes place.

Global warming, and pollution, are costs that are all too easy for this industry to escape. There is an over reliance on this industry on the part of our government, and recent reports have noted how it ensures brings a lack of economic diversity in our regions.<sup>6</sup> The economic costs out weigh the benefits.

We ask you to reject this proposal and the development of the proposed Hawkins-Rumker ‘coal release area’.



Dr Catherine Reynolds

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<sup>3</sup> “Toxic water from old mine entering Sydney's drinking catchment, research warns”, *ABC News*, 21 August, 2017: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-08-21/toxic-water-entering-sydneys-drinking-catchment-warning/8824650>

<sup>4</sup> “Hopes of ecological recovery from coal mine collapse”, *ABC News*, 23 September 2015: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-09-23/hopes-of-ecological-recovery-from-coal-mine-collapse/6796378>

<sup>5</sup> “Mine pollution levels in Blue Mountains could be some of world's worst, insect species dying out”, *ABC News*, 26 Feb 2017: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-02-26/blue-mountains-pollution-mine-wollangambe-river/8303644>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.illawarramercury.com.au/story/7385207/coal-towns-let-down-by-lack-of-diversity-report-finds>