



THE BULGA BUGLE

Singleton Council

Saving Bulga was not a priority for Singleton Council

The case to defend Bulga was not supported strongly by Singleton Council and by negotiating an early Voluntary Planning Agreement prior to the PAC decision, Council certainly undermined

the case for Bulga and the environment.

The Voluntary Planning Agreement which they negotiated did not involve the people most impacted by an expansion, the residents of Bulga. Agreement was reached between Rio Tinto and Council to provide wa-

ter and sewer, spending half the value of the \$11,000,000 agreed under the VPA but without proper consultation with the residents.

'Placemaking' is not proper consultation when it comes to selecting projects and service for a VPA.

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Special points of interest:

- Another dam/bund wall failure

Water and Sewer no compensation

The residents of Bulga have not been demanding water and sewer and believe the proposal should be put to the Bulga residents for their view. Most

see this water and sewer as the responsibility of Council and not a Mining Company. Under this proposal Council provides infrastructure at no

cost to themselves and provides a future cash flow from water and sewer rates raking in the benefit of something they did not pay for.

Why doesn't the VPA clean roofs and tanks

What about consideration being given to Warkworth Mine and installing multi filter water purifications systems on every house in Bulga and Milbrodale? In addition provide a continuous water tank and roof gutter cleaning service paid for from the VPA and continued for the life of the mine. To the residents of Bulga this would

lessen the impact of the Mine expansion and give residents clean water.

Residents who are currently self-sufficient with rain water (albeit polluted) and septic systems feel the whole of the \$11m would be better spent as compensation for the Bulga and Milbrodale residents on projects which will improve our village and lifestyle. Council should discuss

these matters with Bulga and not unilaterally announce our future without reference to the people who are most affected.

VPA to finance other Council projects not impacted by Warkworth Expansion

Of course Council is claiming half of the \$11m for other projects in the Singleton Local Government Area and that does not sit well with the residents of Bulga or others. It is clear that Council has succumbed to the coercion by Rio Tinto who wants Wallaby Scrub Road closed and the

Council's claim they are short of money.

Having this Warkworth Mine approved must have appealed to Council particularly when you read in their latest request to increase rates, that 35.59% of their income is from the special mining rates category.

For Council to have supported Bulga and actively campaigned against the expansion of the mine would not have been in their financial interests.

Wallaby Scrub Road

There is still the closure of Wallaby Scrub Road to consider and Council will make even more cash when this is sold to Rio Tinto. What happened to the 5 unanimous decisions at previous Council meetings not to close Wallaby Scrub Road?

It appears the Council's enthusiasm and speed in negotiating the VPA with Rio Tinto is not compatible with those previous

decisions. Don't forget the original offer in the letter to Council from David Kitto of the Department of Planning in October 2010 that the offer of the VPA was conditional on the closure of Wallaby Scrub Road.

By not opposing this MTW application, Singleton Council has made a windfall of \$11,000,000 (it was Bulga or the Budget!) plus the value of Wallaby Scrub Road.

At the Singleton Council meeting of 19 March 2012 a motion was put to that Council meeting which was unanimously approved. Part of this motion reads "*Council confirms its opposition to the Warkworth Mine Expansion Project including the closure of Wallaby Scrub Road.*" So what or who changed Council's attitude?

The Underground Alternative

The mine may have a future by going underground. This will leave intact Wallaby Scrub Road, the Warkworth Sands Woodlands, provide a barrier between any mining activity and Bulga, reduce noise and air pollution, and save what is left of the aboriginal heritage sites.

The Non-Disturbance Area One as promised to a Bulga residents in the Deed of

Agreement of 2003 (set aside by this current government) could be reinstated as a conservation area in perpetuity.

The Bulga Community demanded in writing to the Premier and Planning Minister to reinstate the protection promised for NDA1. So far no response.

If the government would work with the proposed purchaser

of the Warkworth Mine and established this no-go area as originally proposed, a small amount of faith would be restored both in human nature and the State Government.

To date the New South Wales Government, whilst giving the appearance of starting the turn this monster around, has faded away.

The future for Bulga

The Bulga Milbrodale Progress Association after fighting this expansion for nearly six years will not give up the battle to save Bulga and save the environment.

This New South Wales government and the Commonwealth Government are still out of step with the rest of the world, particularly at this time when the world leaders have agreed on strategies on climate change in Paris.

This State Government is still intent on churning out approvals to get more and more coal out of the ground while the world has agreed to reducing reliability on fossil fuels.

Future for the Hunter Valley

Clearly 20 years of infiltration, lobbying, party donations, political donations, and job scaremongering has all played a part in convincing the State Government that the future for the Hunter Valley is in coal. It is evident to most that the future of this valley long term is in the sustainable industries such as the renewables, wine and tourism, and agriculture which:

- do not destroy the land
- do not destroy villages,
- do not destroy endangered ecologi-

- cal communities,
- do not pollute the air we breathe and
- do not poison our children.

It is time the State and local government woke up to the real future of the Hunter Valley and stop adding to the damage the last 10 years of open cut mining has caused. Post Paris, the World has agreed to go in one direction to save the planet and yet the Baird Government is mining at high speed in the opposite direction

and by doing so is continuing to destroy the Upper Hunter and our kids health.

Baird and Stokes must carry out a stocktake of what they have done and what they are doing. They can no longer assist the mining industry continue on its path of destruction.

Breach of Bund Wall at Rio Tinto's Warkworth Mine

Last week as reported in the Newcastle Herald and evident to anyone driving along Wallaby Scrub Road, there was a breach of a retaining wall/bund at the Warkworth Mine site. The bund wall was constructed to prevent sediment laden water from leaving the mining area.

As late as Friday 15 January there were still millions of litres of water and mud flowing from the excavation site alongside of Wallaby Scrub Road. Rio Tinto noted that the discharge was all onto their own land. However as observed all of that muddy sediment charged water was flowing into creek beds which feed into the Wollombi Brook. Clearly the clearing and destruction of the native bushlands is causing even more damage when the company cannot properly contain their dams or bund walls.

The EPA is already investigating the breach of a dam wall during the previous week at Wambo mine. It will be interesting to read the outcomes of both investigations and what the EPA will do about these breaches.

The arguments and undertakings by Rio Tinto put to the Planning Assessment Commission hearings that they will use 'best practice' to protect the local waterways, only six weeks after receiving an approval, that 'best practice' appears to have followed the water discharge down into the Wollombi Creek.