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The Manager,
Environment Protection Authority. Illawarra

24th October 2012

Thank you for allowing me to comment on BHP Application to vary EPL 2504. I am a resident of Wedderburn, and represented the National Parks Association (Macarthur Branch) on the Appin Area Community Working Group for over a decade.

I am opposed to any further pollution being allowed to be discharged into the Georges River for the following reasons:

It is obvious that the Application is in response to the report undertaken by Dr. Ian Wright, who is a much respected expert, and the Application being proposed at this time, would suggest that excess pollution may have been released into the river for some time.

Lack of flow in the river will increase the pollution load, as there will be less water to dilute chemicals.

Like many of my fellow residents of Wedderburn I have witnessed the decline in the amount of water flowing down the river from Appin, and also the very marked decline in the quality of the water.

Whether the decline in flow and quality is caused by the cracking, gas bubbles, and oxidisation caused by leaching iron from the damaged rocks, or just a natural occurrence is a matter of conjecture, but the fact that it is happening should warn us that the river is in serious need of help, and that a policy of zero harm should be put into place now, not in some distant future when mining has ceased.

The main source of water into the Georges River at Appin was from Brennans Creek, and as you would be aware the creek, gorge and general area is fast being filled with reject coal, from the West Cliff, Appin and Dendrobium Mines.

Your Department would also be aware that most of the water utilised in West Cliff Mine originated in Brennans Creek and its tributaries.

I believe that as the Emplacement Area grows so water flow and quality will get worse, everyone was shocked how quickly Area 2 was completed, and although we are told that Area 3 will last for many years, no doubt Area 4 will be utilised in the future. I expect the area will be used as a coal reject dump for many, many years.

As the reject moves down the valley, water purification holding dams within Area 3 will be extinguished, and Area 4 will see the partial filling of Brennans Creek Dam.

A de salination plant should be installed at West Cliff, to protect water quality, this was successfully undertaken at Appin West Mine to protect the Nepean River, and the Georges should be given the same protection, but it would not answer the question of lack of flow.

An independent consultant should be employed to create a model of the Emplacement Area, to ascertain whether the design has altered the base flow into the river. Could it be that the floor of the Emplacement Area has been designed so that water runs away from the Georges River, in an attempt to stop raw coal reject entering the Georges.

At this time the question has to be asked is the lack of flow caused by the damage caused by longwall mining under the river, the design of the Emplacement Area, or one of nature's quirks, but this question must be answered before any decision can be made into whether further polluting chemicals or even a stop put on existing pollutants be made.

Yours faithfully, Pat Durman (Mrs) Wedderburn resident.