

The Bathurst Community Climate Action Network (BCCAN) is comprised of individuals and groups from the Central West region who want to promote action in response to the Climate Emergency by collaborating with all levels of government and other environmental organisations to protect our environment and biodiversity from the impact of unsustainable human activity. Here are the grounds of our objections to releasing the Hawkins/Rumker thermal coal lease areas.

The People of the Wiradjuri nation developed and maintained a deep and rich connection with the lands in this area. The land nourished all of the person, supplying physical, spiritual, cultural and identity necessities. We wish to acknowledge these First Peoples, and pay our respects to Elders - past, present and emerging. Their spirituality, connection, knowledge and care for country offers us a positive lens to move on together.

1. This area is quite close to Bathurst. Some BCCAN members have bushwalked, birdwatched and spent weekends in the area, and highly value its natural qualities and beauty. That such a major new coal mining area, contributing hugely to greenhouse gas emissions, is possibly proposed there is shocking and very worrying.
2. This proposal is a first step of possibly many areas being opened to coal mining. Its importance is huge, because the Hawkins-Rumker area alone contains an estimated 910 million tonnes of coal. To give perspective, consider: Australia's total annual emissions are currently around 528 million tonnes of carbon dioxide. If fully mined, this new coal area would release four times that amount — 2.2 billion tonnes.¹
3. Only one week ago, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released its new report. They made headlines worldwide, because the hundreds of scientists of the IPCC stated unequivocally — leaving absolutely no room for doubt — humans are responsible for the observed warming of the atmosphere, lands and oceans. In its own words: “The report also shows that human actions still have the potential to determine the future course of climate. The evidence is clear that carbon dioxide (CO₂) is the main driver of climate change, even as other greenhouse gases and air pollutants also affect the climate.”² The Climate Council observed: “The most important climate science update for almost a decade shows **there is a narrow path to avoiding climate catastrophe, but only through immediate, deep and sustained emissions reductions.**

This may be our final warning.”³

Climate change is already wreaking havoc around the world, (floods, bushfires, extreme heat, pressure on water sources and food production, infrastructure damage, people being displaced), with worse to come. The Climate Council notes: “Decisions taken this decade will be the difference between a liveable future for today's young people, and a future that is incompatible with well-functioning human societies.

Every choice made, and every fraction of a degree of avoided warming, matters. The right choices will be measured in lives, livelihoods, species and ecosystems saved. The benefits of stronger action would be evidenced well within our lifetimes, and even more so for our children and grandchildren.

The most important thing is reducing emissions as much and as fast as possible. ”³

There is no room for any new fossil fuel developments.

Other significant supporting reasons to not put these areas up for coal lease:

4. Serious water pollution is caused by discharges incurred by coal mining. Studies published in 2021 found that coal mine discharge water from Tahmoor Colliery, NSW, was saline, alkaline, with ecologically hazardous concentrations of several metals including aluminium, arsenic, nickel, and zinc.⁴ There may be variations compared to what is found in the coal mine water discharges here, both of types of contaminants and to greater or lesser degrees; however, it is a serious and unavoidable addition to the ecological impact of coal mining. This is apart from mining possibly affecting the drawdown of existing bores and water supply.
5. The Hawkins/Rumker area at present is a healthy ecological area. A high percentage of the area is intact forests and woodland, including Threatened Ecological Communities and home to least 8 species of fauna which are listed as Endangered.⁵ The health of the vast majority of streams is rated as good to moderate.⁵

Some BCCAN members know people who live in the affected area. They tell us that local families wish to maintain the health, economy and rural nature of their community. This Hawkins/Rumker region is not reliant on coal. The 'Strategic Statement on Coal Exploration and Mining in NSW' states: 'Working with communities on their long-term sustainability is a key focus for the NSW Government.'⁶ Therefore, continuing from the situation as it exists at present is a positive one, compared to inflicting the damaging legacy, both in carbon and methane emissions and to the soils, plants, animals and water that coal mining causes. We all see the unsightly Ulan and Moolarben coal mines close by. Inevitable damaging water discharges from coal mining have already been noted above.

6. Internationally, "The European Commission has outlined its ambitious policy package to more than halve its emissions by 2030, a move which could have major consequences for climate recalcitrant trading partners like Australia – including an A\$80 plus per tonne carbon tax on imports." President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, said "The fossil fuel economy has reached its limits. We want to leave the next generation a healthy planet as well as good jobs and growth that does not hurt our nature."⁷ <https://reneweconomy.com.au/fossil-fuel-economy-has-reached-its-limits-eu-to-slash-emissions-and-drag-australia-with-it/> July 15, 2021.

The decision to reject these coal leases is vitally important for many reasons. There is no room for any new fossil fuel developments if we're to avoid catastrophic warming.

BCCAN believes the consideration of creating coal leases is flabbergasting, confusing, undermining the good work the present NSW Government is doing in other areas, and extremely serious. The science of climate change is certain. The International community calls for no new coal mines. The local area does not want or need coal mining. The NSW Government has a duty of care and well-being to all to abandon proposals to open new areas to coal mining.

References:

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3. <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/resources/what-does-ipcc-latest-report-mean/> Accessed August 16, 2021.
4. <https://researchdirect.westernsydney.edu.au/islandora/object/uws%3A59218> "14-month water quality investigation of coal mine discharge on two rivers in NSW, Australia: implications for environmental regulation." Accessed August 14, 2021. (FROM 2)
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7. "Fossil Fuel Economy has reached its limits" <https://reneweconomy.com.au/fossil-fuel-economy-has-reached-its-limits-eu-to-slash-emissions-and-drag-australia-with-it/> of July 15, 2021. Accessed August 17, 2021.