

Resolution of Council

6 April 2020

Item 12.3

Coal Mining under Woronora Reservoir

Moved by Councillor Phelps, seconded by Councillor Miller -

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) the NSW Government has recently granted planning approvals for an expansion of coal mining operations under Woronora reservoir, one of Sydney's key drinking water catchments;
- (ii) the new expansion will see new coal faces established under the Woronora dam, which supplies drinking water to Sydney. Up to three new underground coal faces will be established at the mine, with two of them running below the dam's water storage;
- (iii) this decision to allow coal mining under the Woronora reservoir poses a direct threat to the drinking water of hundreds of thousands of Sydneysiders;
- (iv) mining activities under the reservoir could compromise the integrity of the water storages, potentially leading to leakages, and flow on environmental damage to the surrounding water table and the quality of drinking water supplies;
- (v) the full impacts of the underground mining operations will not be known for several decades, and changes in the geological structures below the dam could continue well after the final coal has been extracted from the site;
- (vi) the roof of the mine has the potential to collapse if abandoned, meaning the threat of contamination to Sydney's water supply will remain indefinitely;
- (vii) as reported by the ABC in August 2017, the abandoned Berrima Colliery was found to be releasing increasingly polluted wastewater into the Wingecarribee River which, like the Woronora reservoir, also feeds into Sydney's water supply, despite the mine closing in 2013; and

- (viii) this contamination only emerged in 2015, according to the Environment Protection Authority, two years after its closure;
- (B) the Lord Mayor be requested to write to the NSW Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, the Hon. Rob Stokes, on behalf of Council requesting the NSW Government reverse its decision on the long wall coal mine approval under Woronora reservoir; and
- (C) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to release a public statement via City communication channels on behalf of Council requesting the NSW Government reverse its decision on the long wall coal mine approval under Woronora reservoir.

Variation. At the request of Councillor Miller, and by consent, the motion was varied such that it read as follows –

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) the NSW Government has recently granted planning approvals for an expansion of coal mining operations under Woronora reservoir, one of Sydney's key drinking water catchments;
- (ii) the new expansion will see new coal faces established under the Woronora dam, which supplies drinking water to Sydney. Up to three new underground coal faces will be established at the mine, with two of them running below the dam's water storage;
- (iii) this decision to allow coal mining under the Woronora reservoir poses a direct threat to the drinking water of hundreds of thousands of Sydneysiders;
- (iv) mining activities under the reservoir could compromise the integrity of the water storages, potentially leading to leakages, and flow on environmental damage to the surrounding water table and the quality of drinking water supplies;
- (v) the full impacts of the underground mining operations will not be known for several decades, and changes in the geological structures below the dam could continue well after the final coal has been extracted from the site;
- (vi) the roof of the mine has the potential to collapse if abandoned, meaning the threat of contamination to Sydney's water supply will remain indefinitely;
- (vii) as reported by the ABC in August 2017, the abandoned Berrima Colliery was found to be releasing increasingly polluted wastewater into the Wingecarribee River which, like the Woronora reservoir, also feeds into Sydney's water supply, despite the mine closing in 2013;
- (viii) this contamination only emerged in 2015, according to the EPA, two years after its closure;
- (ix) the Lord Mayor has written to the NSW Minister for Planning and Public Services, the Hon. Rob Stokes, on behalf of Council requesting the NSW Government reverse its decision on the long wall coal mine approval under Woronora reservoir and implement a permanent ban on all coal mining in the Sydney water catchment; and

- (B) that the Chief Executive Officer be requested to release a public statement via City communication channels on behalf of Council requesting the NSW Government reverse its decision on the long wall coal mine approval under Woronora reservoir, and implement a permanent ban on all coal mining in the Sydney water catchment.

The motion was carried on the following show of hands –

Ayes (9) The Lord Mayor, Councillors Chung, Kok, Miller, Phelps, Scott, Scully, Thalys, and Vithoukas

Noes (1) Councillor Forster.

Motion carried.

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