

# Bylong Valley to fight mines

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19 Nov, 2010 09:33 AM

(Mudgee Guardian)

Bylong Valley residents are uniting to fight coal mining proposals which they fear will destroy one of Australia's most fertile and beautiful valleys.

The Korea Electric Power Corporation (Kepco) has bought two authorities to explore 10,300 hectares at Bylong from the Anglo American Metallurgical Coal (AAMC) and plans to begin mining in 2016.



HOW GREEN WAS MY VALLEY: Bylong Valley residents Peter Grieve, Jodie Nancarrow and Wendy Wheeler overlooking part of the Bylong Valley which could become coal mines. 191110/007

Kepco has announced plans to eventually produce 7.5 million tons of coal a year from open cut and underground mines in the valley.

Mt Penny Coal (Cascade Coal) and the NSW Department of Industry and Investment also hold exploration leases in the Bylong Valley.

Seventh generation Bylong Valley resident Peter Grieve said mining would destroy not only productive agricultural land and aquifers, but also an area rich in history.

The area covered by exploration leases and authorities includes seven historical homesteads: Bylong Station, Sunnyside, Wingarra, Budden, Torrie Lodge, Wigelmar and Tarwyn Park, home of Peter Andrew's land restoration projects, known as natural sequence farming.

Bylong also has a proud racing history, producing so many leading thoroughbreds that it was dubbed "The Valley of Champions".

Mr Grieve said a rare pine which grows nowhere in the world but on Mt Tal Tal could also be threatened.

"There is not another valley like it, and it would be shame to see it destroyed in the name of coal," he said.

The newly formed Bylong Valley Protection Alliance (BVPA) has called for a state and national ban on mining of prime agricultural land such as the Bylong Valley.

Interim BVPA president Jodie Nancarrow said she was saddened and frustrated by the prospect of mining in Bylong Valley.

"I live in a place that has a great community," she said. "I always feel special living in Bylong, even in a drought. For me it is home."

“I find it quite frustrating that the government does not have the foresight or strategy in place to protect prime agricultural land and say ‘you can’t touch this’.

“It makes me frustrated and sad that a multi-national company can come and do what they like and tell you bugger all.”

Resident Wendy Wheeler, who moved to the Bylong Valley from Sydney four years ago, said coal mining would destroy the tight-knit community.

“There are other beautiful places in the country but this is special,” she said.

“You wake up in the morning and feel great and want to get out and do things.

“How can anyone just destroy it?”

The Bylong group is working with the Caroon Coal Action Group, which is fighting coal mining plans in the Liverpool Plains, to plan their campaign to protect the valley.