

Group concerned about mining effects plans coal meeting in November

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A group of community members concerned about the effect of coal mining in the Mid-Western Region are planning a public meeting in November to allow others to express their views.

The group has been meeting informally and researching how the expansion of the area could affect health, water, tourism, and agriculture.

Member Barbara Hickson said she had been approached by concerned citizens to convene a public meeting in Mudgee before Christmas and would work with the community and Mid-Western Regional Council to plan the meeting.

"Two major issues are the impending absorption of local water supplies and the potential coal train movements throughout the Cudgegong Valley," she said.

"The potential of six gigalitres (6,000,000,000 litres) being taken up by the Cobbora Coal Mine proposal has brought many in the community to fear that water supplies for local users may dry up within a decade.

"Further potential mining in the Bylong Valley, Hargraves, Gulgong and The Cherry Tree Hill area are motivating the community to work together.

"Community concerns about further mining development have been raised in a number of public meetings and by Mid-Western Regional Council.

"The prospect is that NSW-owned power stations are seeking to establish their own coal mines which would be approved by themselves."

Earlier this year, Mid-Western Regional Council requested an embargo on approval of any new coal mining developments until a regional strategic management plan is in place.

The group is also supporting a call from Cr Russell Holden for greater transparency in the processes used to assess mining applications.

Cr Holden has given notice of a motion to today's Mid-Western Regional Council meeting calling on council to formally request a copy of the full base water data for the proposed Cobbora Mine, and to write to the Department of Planning requesting written confirmation of their offer to pay for half the cost of an independent evaluation of the potential effects on water.

Councillor Holden will also call on council to write to the NSW Premier and all appropriate ministers, requesting input into all and any negotiations on mining expansion in the Mid-Western Region.

Mayor, GM to meet Minister

Mayor Des Kennedy and general manager Warwick Bennett will meet with Department of Planning representatives tomorrow to discuss concerns over the effects of coal mining expansion in the region.

Mr Kennedy and Mr Bennett will also meet with Minister for Planning Tony Kelly on November 3.

Issues raised will include the proposed Ulan West project, and in particular a proposal in the draft condition of consent that a voluntary planning agreement (VPA) with Mid-Western Regional Council be deferred until the end of December, 2011.

The VPA would cover Ulan Coal Mines Limited' contributions towards local infrastructure and services to meet demand generated by the project, including contributions to maintenance of Cope Road.

Mid-Western Regional Council will discuss its response to the proposed conditions of consent at its meeting tonight.

