**Submission for Planning Assessment Commission, 15 May 2015**

**Re Springvale Colliery Expansion Proposal, Western Coalfield**

**Proponent: Centennial Coal**

Rivers SOS has held a regional meeting at Lithgow, where we viewed some of the swamps desiccated by Centennial Coal’s operations, and we have also been involved in the large rally held at the famous Gardens of Stone: wonderful environmental assets in danger of destruction, to the shame of our generation.

Rivers SOS is also active in the Protect Sydney’s Water Alliance and so we feel bound to object to this proposal to expand mining operations at Springvale Colliery. Quite apart from continued environmental destruction, the prospect of large scale added pollution of the river systems feeding the Warragamba Dam, namely the Cox’s River, is unconscionable. This Dam supplies Greater Sydney’s residents with 80% of its water. It has already had some contamination from algal growths and further pollution problems cannot be contemplated.

Already the river systems feeding the southern dams are being increasingly polluted and cracked by mining operations and the cumulative destruction of our water supply systems must not be allowed to continue. The firm prospect of an El Nino weather event, bringing another severe drought in the near future, will exacerbate pollution impacts through lessening dilution.

The proponent’s suggestion of diluting pollution by adding polluted waste water from Clarence Colliery is risible.

The only way to allow this expansion would be to require Centennial Coal to install a reverse osmosis desalination plant. Their argument that this is too costly must be disregarded, as the cost to health and environment for the long term is far more.

When Rivers SOS revealed in 2006 that BHP Billiton was pumping over 2 tonnes of salt per day into the Upper Nepean River at Douglas Park, the company had the decency to install a small treatment plant at their Tower Colliery (now re-named Appin West). In the case of Centennial Coal, this is even more necessary, given the feed-in to the Warragamba Dam.

However Centennial Coal is one of the most devious and dangerous operators, unlike BHP Billiton. You must know that its conduct in the past has been notoriously bad, incurring large fines and many non-compliance notices.

As usual, DoPE has given a fairly favourable assessment of this proposal. DoPE, for whatever reason, is unable to refuse any mine or CSG proposal and their “advice” must be treated with caution. We ask you to consider the future of what is still one of the world’s best water supplies, and the ecology of the river system and the threatened feeder swamps and environment, and to please reject this expansion.

Caroline Graham

Rivers SOS