



**Attention: Environment or Resources Reporter
MEDIA RELEASE – 27th June 2007**

**FOI Report:
Government ignored mining damage
to Sydney water supply catchment**

Freedom of Information (FOI) documents released today reveal that the NSW Government was informed by the Sydney Catchment Authority of an unfolding environmental disaster in the Woronora Dam catchment well before it approved further underground coal mining in the same area.

Total Environment Centre has published a dossier ***What Happened to the Waratah Rivulet? A case study of the failure to protect streams from longwall mining.***

"These documents go to the heart of everything that is wrong with mining approvals and river damage across New South Wales. The Mining Minister and his department are practising greenwash", said TEC Natural Areas Campaigner David Burgess.

The dossier reveals that the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) approved further longwall panels at the Metropolitan Colliery despite:

- the feeder swamp for the rivulet having "collapsed" and "failed" in 2004
- the riverbed and pools cracking and draining dry for a length of 2km as longwall coal panels were mined up to 2006, along with the whole watercourse tilting to the east resulting in severe bank erosion
- the NSW Government being urged by the SCA in 2004 to take a "precautionary approach" in preventing further mining damage to the Waratah Rivulet
- senior environmental scientists at the SCA believing the damage likely to have a "significant effect on water yields" for the Woronora Dam
- the SCA's opinion that plans submitted to the NSW Government by the mining company as part of the approval process were "deficient"
- the SCA's opinion that the mining company's monitoring and remediation programs was are failure

"A ministerial briefing note alerting the government to the damage and urging a precautionary approach to mining under the river, repeated statements by catchment officers believing that the damage was impacting on the sustainable supply of water - was followed by another rubber stamp from the NSW

The documents also reveal that following the most recent approval the SCA took the position that future mine plans should “avoid mining under significant streams” in the Woronora catchment. Peabody Energy's plans to massively expand mining under the Waratah Rivulet are expected to be lodged with the NSW Government within weeks.

"This will be a major test of the lemma Government's commitment to water security and protecting rivers and streams from continuing destruction by longwall mining", Mr Burgess continued.

"The regulatory system is failing and will continue to do so until there are major reforms, including removal of DPI as consent authority for longwall panels; legislative protection for waterways and application of the precautionary principle."

**For further information or copies of the dossier contact:
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