

Colin and Martha East  
165 Browns Road  
Black Hill 2322  
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Director – Strategic Assessments  
NSW Department of Planning

**OBJECTION TO:**

**BLACK HILL CONCEPT PLAN MP 10\_0093 INDUSTRIAL REZONING**

We are long term residents of Black Hill, living a few kilometers west of the Black Hill block subject lands and our son attended Black Hill Public School. We object strongly to this current proposal and the reasons for our objections are as follows.

- This proposal, if approved, would irrevocably change the rural nature of the Black Hill area. It has long had a reputation in the Lower Hunter as a place to go to experience the wildlife and for bird watching. Because of its unique position in the Lower Hunter, it is now feeling the pressure of expansion from urban centres.
- We contend that NSW Planning should be providing a buffer zone to all this industrial and urban sprawl. Allowing this industrial development to go ahead would be the thin end of the wedge and would spell the end of Black Hill as we know it. Currently there is no industrial development south of John Renshaw Drive – instead there are thousands of hectares of timbered land. We already have to endure the eyesores of the industrial subdivisions along Weakleys Drive and the deep voids of the open cut coal mines of Bloomfield and Donaldson with their unsightly piles of overburden along the northern side of John Renshaw Drive. All this land once used to be thickly timbered forests separating Beresfield, Thornton, Black Hill and East Maitland. Now we are faced with the prospect of the encroachment of urban and industrial sprawl on the southern side of John Renshaw Drive north of Black Hill Road.  
This should be left as a Conservation Zone and buffer for the Black Hill area as intended in the *Newcastle LEP* 2003 and draft LEP 2010.
- The Black Hill block of 183 hectares has very high conservation value. It contains 72% Lower Hunter Spotted Gum – Ironbark Forest, and Endangered Ecological Community (EEC) under the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995 which would be cleared for this industrial subdivision. This is totally unacceptable and would destroy an area of EEC and change the feeling and nature of the broader Black Hill area forever. It is more important and valuable not only to Black Hill but to the whole region that this woodland be retained than that we have even more of an already oversupplied industrial zone.

- Instead of Industrial rezoning, all of the 138 ha of EEC should be part of the wild life corridor system, Stockton to the Watagans, as in the Lower Hunter Conservation Plan.
- The Draft Lower Hunter Regional Strategy showed the area between John Renshaw Drive and Black Hill Rd as 'Conservation Land'. To the Black Hill community this provided a buffer from the Bloomfield and Donaldson open cut mines north of John Renshaw Drive and which were designated in this document as 'employment and transport hub' lands. The sudden change from "Conservation Land' to 'Employment Lands' for the area between John Renshaw Drive and Black Hill Road in the final Lower Hunter Regional Strategy was something the community and community groups wanted to object to but there was no process to do so. There was no community consultation in making this change to 'employment lands' nor were we given an opportunity to object to it. To compound matters the final Lower Hunter Regional Strategy has allowed this inappropriate development application for industrial rezoning , south of John Renshaw Drive, to be made on a false premise.
- If this plan was approved , against the community's wishes, then the following two conditions should be included: a)that any industrial (employment lands ) are not extended beyond the boundaries of this particular block and b) a fully timbered buffer of 100 metres be imposed around the perimeter of the block. It has been proven that a 50 metre buffers at Donaldson mine are totally inadequate as a visual screen.
- There is no analysis for the need for more industrial land in the Lower Hunter and certainly not for the Black Hill area. The Western Corridor Study identifies 1,500 ha of potential employment lands in Newcastle and Lake Macquarie LGAs alone! There are hundreds of hectares of Donaldson and Bloomfield mining lands already destroyed, there are also 500 ha of Hunter Employment Zone (HEZ) land at Kurri Kurri which has already been approved as an industrial subdivision. This land is even more strategically placed now given the commencement of the Hunter Expressway from the F3 to Branxton. Hence there is no need or justification for the Black Hill block to be rezoned as an industrial subdivision. The justification and consideration of alternatives is unsatisfactorily attempted in this application.
- The Black Hill block has not been evaluated in the Concept Plan's Environmental Assessment in isolation from the Voluntary Planning Agreement (VPA), between Coal and Allied and the NSW Government, as it should have been. This leads to concern that the Dept of Planning and the Minister might let the perceived benefits of the VPA influence the evaluative process, under the EP&A Act, of the Black Hill block, rather than evaluating it as a separate application for an industrial subdivision.

- There has been no community consultation at Black Hill specifically about the Concept Plan that is currently on exhibition. The original Director General's requirements were issued in April 2008. Yet over all this time and including this exhibition period the proponent Coal and Allied made no contact with the Black Hill community or community groups to explain this proposal. This is totally unacceptable and the Director General or Minister should direct the proponent to explain/consult with the community and community groups before a re-exhibition period.

We expect that this application of the Black Hill block will be treated as an application independent of the influence of the VPA. We urge the Department of Planning to reject the current Concept Plan and that Coal and Allied be required to consider adding this Black Hill block to their Conservation Lands thereby preserving the nature of the Black Hill area.

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