

Unanimous support for moratorium

There was unanimous support from hundreds of people, attending a public meeting held on 22 August 2006 at the Wyong Memorial Hall, for a moratorium on future mining activities in the water catchment areas.

The meeting, convened by the community group, the Australian Coal Alliance, “was the best public meeting that I’ve ever attended,” said Councillor Greg Best.

Lee Rhiannon, MLC for the Greens, said “Of all the community coal meetings I’ve been to in NSW, this was the largest and the best. We were all inspired.”

Bryce Courtney opened the meeting, followed by various speakers, including Geoff Hunter, member for Lake Macquarie, Lee Rhiannon, Greens MLC, Federal member for Dobell Ken Ticehurst, Brenton Pavier, nominated representative for Chris Hartcher, Shadow Minister for the Central Coast, and speakers from Nepean Action Group, Gloucester Barrington Stroud Preservation Alliance and representatives from the Chain Valley Bay coal mining disaster.



Cr Brenton Pavier announced that a coalition government would not permit any coal mining in the valleys that could threaten the Central Coast’s water supply. He said special legislation would be introduced into Parliament to protect the Wyong water catchment valleys.

Alan Hayes, Australian Coal Alliance spokesman, powerful and dynamic presentation drove home the problems facing the water supply of the entire Central Coast if the longwall coal project was allowed to proceed.

Mr Hayes said “Our victory will not ripple across the pond, it will be a gigantic tidal wave of change.”

He concluded “In 1817, a group of Australians fought for what they believed was right. In 2006, Australians are again fighting for what they know is right. This is our time! This is our Eureka stockade!”

The strident conclusion of his speech filled the Wyong Memorial Hall to the John Lennon song “Power to the People”, charging the audience with inspiration. Coal Alliance members, wearing red T-shirts, emblazoned with the slogan “Water Not Coal” danced on stage waving red and white protest signs.

“The atmosphere was electric, and I felt so inspired by it all. The audience was chanting “Power to the People”, and I could feel the floor rumbling beneath my feet,” said Elizabeth McVie of Jilliby.

“The meeting was the largest and most dynamic I’ve ever attended,” said Caroline Graham, from Rivers SOS, Sydney.

The following evening the motion for a moratorium was put before Wyong Council, and Councillors unanimously agreed to support the community.

Mr Hayes, who spoke to the motion at the Council meeting, said “60 per cent of the people attending the meeting were from the urban areas. This is very heartening, since this fight involves the entire Central Coast.”