

# Dust over Wollar

Mudgee Guardian

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Oct. 16, 2013, 4 a.m.



Dust at the Wilpinjong Mine on the weekend.

Mudgee District Environment Group has accused Wilpinjong Coal of breaching its Environmental Pollution Licence twice within the space of four days last week.

The environment group alleges the coal mine was operating heavy machinery to handle overburden material during adverse weather conditions on Thursday, October 10 and Sunday, October 13.

A failure to stop operations during the “wild and windy” weather generated “clouds of polluting dust” according to the environment group.

The environment group said they were “greatly concerned by the photographs taken by Wollar residents showing high levels of dust pollution leaving the mine site and blowing through the village”.

Mudgee District Environment Group chairperson, Bev Smiles, said Wilpinjong - owned and operated by Peabody Energy - has strict environmental pollution management requirements.

She said the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) grants all coal mines an Environmental Pollution Licence with strict conditions and guidelines.

“The issue of dust pollution and health has been highlighted in communities in the Hunter Valley. This has caused the EPA to develop pollution reduction programs with stricter conditions,” she said.

“MDEG is concerned that Wilpinjong mine has not complied with conditions of their EPL which requires the cessation of handling of overburden material during adverse weather conditions.

“The wind has been so wild, no amount of water will suppress dust caused by large mine vehicles.

“Wilpinjong mine is required to cease the operation of mining activities during these type of conditions.”

Ms Smiles said the incident had been reported to the EPA.

On Tuesday a Peabody Energy spokeswoman said “the Wilpinjong Coal Mine takes its environmental responsibilities very seriously”.

“Given recent weather conditions with below average rainfall and high winds, the district has experienced higher than normal airborne dust levels,” she said.

“Notwithstanding this, the mine undertakes a range of activities to ensure that we control dust from site but also comply with environmental obligations.

“Wilpinjong Coal considers itself as a responsible and active member of the community.”

Peabody Energy did not comment whether they stopped operations during the windy conditions on Thursday and Sunday.

For air quality monitoring throughout NSW visit <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/AQMS/>

<http://www.mudgeeguardian.com.au/story/1842302/dust-over-wollar/?cs=1233>