

ITEM 14

NOTICE OF MOTION - COUNCILLOR CATH BLAKEY - BRANDY AND WATER CREEK CLEAN UP

Councillor Cath Blakey has submitted the following Notice of Motion –

“I formally move that Wollongong City Council –

- 1 Note the pollution event on Sunday 9 August 2020 from the South 32 Dendrobium mine at Mt Kembla.
- 2 Note the pollution event has impacted the downstream water way of Brandy and Water Creek in Figtree, which is part of the American Creek and Allans Creek catchment.
- 3 Thank the local residents who have spent many hours volunteering at the Brandy and Water Creek Bushcare site conducting weed removal, planting native vegetation and undertaking works to improve bank stability and aquatic ecology.
- 4 Write to the Minister for the Environment to appeal for a robust and comprehensive investigation of the breach of the Dendrobium water discharge license, including a comprehensive clean-up of the pollution residue, and public and transparent reporting on the quantity and quality of the pollutants, and what actions are being undertaken to prevent further pollution incidents.
- 5 Write to the NSW Treasurer to ensure that the NSW Environment and Protection Authority is sufficiently resourced to ensure robust and comprehensive regulation of pollution controls.”

Background provided by Councillor Blakey:

South 32 owns and operates the Dendrobium metallurgical coal mine at Mt Kembla. The NSW Environment and Protection Authority regulates the water discharge license for the mine and investigates any compliance failure. On Monday 10 August 2020, South 32 informed the EPA of a water discharge license breach when a stormwater pipe failed, sending an as yet undisclosed volume of coal slurry down the Brandy and Water Creek, and it's downstream tributaries. The pollution incident was also reported by WIN TV with footage from residents of Darragh Drive, Figtree.

The Wollongong Council area has numerous active and historic coal mines with detention ponds and emplacement areas. In the past, some pollution incidents have resulted in prosecutions such as the \$30,000 fines against Wollongong Coal Limited after turbid (sediment-laden) water was discharged from the Russell Vale coal mine to Bellambi Gully in November 2016. However, in other areas there have been clean up notices issues that required extensive remediation work such as the Centennial Coal's Clarence Colliery pollution incident into the Wollangambe River in 2015. In this case the clean-up methods to remove any coal fines, and limit downstream movement of any coal fines included the strategic placement and maintenance of in-stream barriers, and removal of coal fines using hand tools and a small suction pump.

Further information on the Wollangambe River incident can be found on the following websites -

- www.epa.nsw.gov.au/newsletters/epa-connect-newsletter/spring-october-2017/coal-spill-into-world-heritage-area-costs-clarence-colliery-more-than-3-million
- www.centennialcoal.com.au/News/Latest-News/Media-Statement-Wollangambe-River-Clean-Up-Underway

Information regarding the Bellambi Gully pollution incident can be found on the following website -

- www.epa.nsw.gov.au/news/media-releases/2017/epamedia17090601