



29 April 2019

Howard Reed  
Director – Resource Assessments  
Department of Planning and Environment

By email: [Howard.Reed@planning.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Howard.Reed@planning.nsw.gov.au)  
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Dear Mr Reed,

**Dartbrook Coal Mine Modification 7 (DA 231-7-2000 MOD7) – Request for Additional Information**

On 9 April 2019 the Independent Planning Commission (**Commission**) held a public meeting as part of its consideration of the Dartbrook Coal Mine Modification (the **Project**). The Commission is seeking additional information from the Department of Planning and Environment (**Department**) and other NSW Government agencies to assist in considering these issues.

**Economics – Independent Peer Review**

The Commission is seeking an independent economic review of the Project, with a particular focus on the provided cost-benefit analysis (**CBA**). This review should provide consideration - to the information provided by the AQC Dartbrook Management Pty Ltd (**Proponent**), Upper Hunter Shire Council and members of the public. The Commission is seeking comment on the following aspects of the Project's CBA:

1. coal price and quality assumptions;
2. tax, royalty and VPA payments;
3. capital cost assumptions;
4. head count for operation;
5. site rehabilitation costs;
6. viability and financial capacity of the Proponent,
7. Green House Gas emissions;
8. minimal or no costs for impacts (GHG, amenity, health agricultural and equine industries);
9. site rehabilitation requirements and costs; and
10. costs associated with the reopening and operation the coal washery.

**Mine Safety – Resource Regulator**

The Commission is seeking additional clarification to assist in considering the issues raised in relation to mine safety and understands that water and gas issues were very problematic at the mine. In light of this, the Commission seeks advice from the Resources Regulator on:

11. the nature and magnitude of the risks of the project;



12. how the proposal complies with the environmental assessment criteria of the Environmental Compliance Operations;
13. potential safety issues and risk of spontaneous combustion, with regard to the previous high gas levels experienced;
14. safety issues associated with high gas levels anticipated using the bord and pillar mining method and longwalls mining should these methods be resumed;
15. safety and suitability of the proposed mine shaft; and
16. the Resource Regulator's level of confidence and satisfaction that that these risks can be adequately managed, and the suitability of the mitigation measures proposed by the Proponent to adequately address the identified safety issues.

### **Groundwater – Department of Industry - Water**

The Commission is seeking clarification from the Department of Industry in relation to groundwater issues, specifically if the proposed shaft into the Hunter Tunnel is within the Hunter River alluvium and will incur groundwater ingress. The Commission seeks advice on:

17. the adequacy of the protection measures proposed by the Proponent in its RtS i.e. conducting a test bore of the site prior to the commencement of any shaft construction and lining the shaft if alluvium water is encountered; and
18. whether this will constitute aquifer interference activity and what approvals, if any, may be required.

### **Impact on ECIC (Equine Critical Industry Cluster)**

The Commission notes that a small area of mapped ECIC is located above the indicative Bord and Pillar Mining Area. The Proponent claims that bord and pillar mining methods will ensure surface levels are maintained at levels that are imperceptible and thus far less subsidence will occur than under the approved longwall method. The Commission seeks comment on:

19. the suitability of mining beneath mapped ECIC;
20. the impact of bord and pillar mining beneath mapped ECIC; and
21. possible impacts if longwall mining beneath mapped ECIC is recommenced.

### **Cumulative Impact of Air Pollution**

The Commission is seeking additional clarification to assist in relation to cumulative air quality. The Commission seeks comment on:

22. what is the Department's approach to assessing cumulative impacts of air pollution and what is the relationship, if any, of this approach with the EPA monitoring network;



23. the Commission understands from public submissions that the EPA monitoring network is frequently indicating exceedances of health criteria for PM10 and PM2.5 in the airshed. The Commission is seeking comment from the Department on these exceedances, specifically whether or not there are frequent and significant exceedances of air quality criteria in the airshed, and if so, whether any more emissions should be approved if emissions are already exceeded.

### **Attachments**

Please find attached the following information for reference:

- A. Upper Hunter Shire Council Presentation dated 8 April 2019;
- B. Michael White Mining Review Presentation dated 9 April 2019;
- C. Owen Droop Water Resources Presentation dated 9 April 2019;
- D. Environmental Justice Australia Presentation dated 9 April 2019;
- E. Proponent's Additional Comments to the Commission dated 23 April 2019;
- F. Hunter Thoroughbred Breeders Association comments to the Commission dated 26 April 2019; and
- G. Marsden Jacobs Associates Economic Impact Presentation dated 26 April 2019.

If you have any questions, please contact Brad James, Senior Planning Officer on 9383 2100 or [bradley.james@ipcn.nsw.gov.au](mailto:bradley.james@ipcn.nsw.gov.au).

Regards,

**Brad James**  
Senior Planning Officer  
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