

9 November 2017

Wayne McCauley
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Planning Assessment Commission
Ref: D482-17 Wallarah 2 Coal Project

Planning Assessment Commission hearing

I thank the Commission for the opportunity to forward a submission further to the public hearing on 3 November 2017.

Firstly I would like to refer the Commission to my previous submissions on this proposal in its various guises over the last 8 years, there are still a number of issues that I don't believe have been addressed at all and many have not been addressed to my satisfaction but have been glossed over by the Proponent.

A number of speakers (with whom I wholehearted agree) at the public hearing on 3 November highlighted the issue that the previous PAC reports had raised the issue of there being "no net impact on potential catchment yield" ie no net impact on the water system of the Valleys, yet both the Proponent and DPE appear to have somehow turned this around to only be related to the Central Coast Water Supply system and not to individual landholders in the Valleys that are likely to be effected. Any return of treated water to upstream of the pumping station near Woodbury's Bridge has no impact on my land or water losses sustained therein. On this basis I fail to see how the PAC requirement has been addressed and resolved. As was also raised at the hearing, there has been no real detail provided of how the water from the mine is to be treated to provide potable quality water, there has been no detailed investigation of the likely water quality to be extracted from the mine and thus the extent of treatment and its feasibility is still unknown. The draft conditions provided by DPE also only relate to the period up to mine closure which is unrealistic when any impacts on the Valleys water system will last much longer than this, if not an eternity.

I would strongly support Dr Phillip Pell's submission to the hearing which unfortunately could not be presented in detail due to time constraints but clearly raised serious concerns on the accuracy and veracity of the Proponents reports on the hydrology of the Valleys water system and on the quantity of water to be returned to the water system as he and other speakers rightly raised the issue that the you can't measure what does not occur.

An issue raised at the public hearing (which was one I raised at the original application hearings) is the financial capability of the company undertaking the project (ie its financial backing) due to the high cost of rehabilitation and remediation in the normal course of a mining project or in the event of unintended consequences as highlighted by recent cases of environment degradation and failure of companies to close mines. I consider the value of the security / financial guarantees required by government regulations are far below the real costs of rehabilitation today or of any estimate of remediation costs and would strongly request the PAC to review and address this issue.

I believe there has been conflicting documentation on whether a landholder who receives damage to their property as a result of subsidence due to the proposed mine is to take the matter up with the Proponent or the Mines Subsidence Board. There are many reports of landholders have extreme difficulty in obtaining compensation from the Mine Subsidence

Board over the years. I would request that the PAC clearly clarify this issue if the development application is to be approved.

As was raised by a number of speakers at the hearing, the growing number of “stringent” conditions that are proposed for this development application tend to suggest that the risks of something going wrong or the adequacy of the Proponent’s EIS leave a lot to be desired. I share many people’s concerns and lack of confidence in the Proponent’s ability to deliver adequate and timely plans that are required by the proposed conditions or the ability of the DPE and others to review, accept and subsequently monitor and regulate these plans and conditions. Recent evidence from other mining projects no doubt fuels these concerns.

I don’t believe that the Proponent fully addressed the original and updated Director General’s Requirements and therefore the EIS should never have been accepted by DPE. How many attempts does the Proponent get to address mandatory requirements before the DPE and Government says enough is enough and reject the application outright.

I don’t believe that the Proponent has fully addressed the issues raised by PAC in its previous reports and therefore the EIS (and its addendums) should not have been accepted by DPE and recommended for approval.

I note that the amended development application is based on train loading on a siding and not a balloon loop as the vast majority of other coal mines are. The proposed train loading is the least efficient system possible and I would question who in the coal freight industry the Proponent has been talking too. While the push –pull / distributed power operation is feasible I don’t believe that it is currently operational anywhere in NSW in the manner suggested. I recollect seeing a reference to the use of 90 class locomotives in the documentation which is impractical as these locos do not have distributed power equipment fitted and also are too heavy to operate on the tracks down to Wyee. All modern (last 25+ years) coal wagons require operation in a constant one direction through the coal unloaders at Newcastle due to the automated unloading system, this will not be possible without shunting movements prior to entering (or leaving) the coal unloading terminals and I doubt that the track owners would allow regular shunting and changing ends which will block the main train lines around Newcastle. The proposal will require train crews to change ends at the loading point near Wyee and this will require additional time as well as additional facilities including a footpath the length of the loading siding with appropriate lighting which I don’t believe has been considered in the proposal to date and definitely the lighting issue and its impact has not been addressed (similar requirements for a footpath and lighting will also be required at the site in Newcastle where the changing ends will be required).

I again request that this development application be rejected as there are far too many unanswered questions and risks to the community for the limited economic benefit that will flow to the community and NSW as a whole.

Thank You

Wayne McCauley