



Received by IPC  
Tuesday 8 June 2021

Professor Mary O'Kane AC  
Chair - Independent Planning Commission

Via email: [REDACTED]

Dear Professor O'Kane

**Hume Coal Project and Berrima Rail Project (SSD 7172 and SSD 7171)**

The Department has completed its assessment of the merits of Hume Coal Project and Berrima Rail Project (SSD 7172 and SSD 7171), hereafter referred to as 'the project'. The project proposes to build a new underground coal mine in the Southern Highlands region of NSW to extract 50 million tonnes of run-of-mine coal over 19 years (the Hume Coal Project), and develop associated rail infrastructure to support the mining operations (the Berrima Rail Project).

During exhibition of the project, the Department received more than 50 unique public submissions objecting to the project. The Independent Planning Commission (the Commission) is therefore the consent authority for the project.

In December 2018, the then Minister for Planning requested the Commission to hold a public hearing into the project and prepare a report summarising the Commission's findings. The Department then referred its preliminary assessment of the project to the Commission, concluding that the project would not be in the public interest and should not be approved.

In February 2019, the Commission held a public hearing and in May 2019, published its report which made a number of recommendations seeking a range of additional information to enable the Commission to reach a position on the merits of the project.

In April 2020, at the request of the Department, Hume Coal Pty Limited (Hume Coal, the Applicant) provided its response to the Commission's report. The Department has since undertaken additional consultation with key government agencies and independent experts and finalised its assessment of the project.

Based on this assessment, the Department considers that the project is not in the public interest and recommends that the Commission refuses to grant consent. The Department does not accept that the residual risks can be managed through post-approval conditions of consent, given the potential impacts and uncertainties.

The Department is now referring the project back to the Commission for determination. I have attached a copy of the Department's final assessment report, including the recommended instruments of refusal for the Commission's consideration.

The Minister for Planning and Public Spaces has also requested that a further public hearing be held into the carrying out of the project and that a determination be made within 12 weeks of receiving the Department's assessment report. Please find attached a copy of the Minister's request.

If you have any questions or wish to arrange a briefing, please contact Stephen O'Donoghue on [REDACTED] or by email at [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely

8/06/2021

**Marcus Ray**  
Group Deputy Secretary  
Planning and Assessment