

Our ref: McPhillamys Gold Project (SSD-9505) – Referral Letter

Professor Mary O’Kane AC
Chair - Independent Planning Commission
Via email: [REDACTED]

17 November 2022

McPhillamys Gold (SSD 9505) Referral to Independent Planning Commission

Dear Professor O’Kane

The Department has completed its assessment of the merits of the McPhillamys Gold Project (SSD-9505).

The application is referred to the Independent Planning Commission (the Commission) for determination noting that the Minister has requested the Commission to also hold a public hearing into the carrying out of the project.

The project would involve developing an open cut gold mine to extract up to 60.8 million tonnes (Mt) of ore and produce up to 2 million ounces of gold over 15 years, and an associated 90-kilometre underground water supply pipeline to transfer water from coal mining and power station operations in Lithgow to the mine site near Blayney.

The Department publicly exhibited the development application for an extended period, from 12 September 2019 until 24 October 2019, and received a total of 648 public submissions during the exhibition period, comprising of 61% objecting (395 submissions), 33% in support (217 submissions) and 6% providing comments (36 submissions).

Submissions in support generally commented on the economic benefits of the project, including employment generation and increased opportunities for local businesses and service providers, social diversity, and associated social benefits for the surrounding and wider region. Those objecting to the project raised a range of issues, as well as environmental and social cumulative impacts on the surrounding Kings Plains community, including impacts on the amenity of the local community in Kings Plains (through noise, air, visual and lighting impacts), water resource (including potential downstream impacts on users and the aquatic environment), biodiversity, agriculture (including impacts on local beekeeping industry), Aboriginal cultural heritage, social and economic impacts.

Following the exhibition period, the Department received additional representations on the project, mainly from the local landholders and their representative, the majority of which objected to the project.

The Department’s detailed assessment of the project has been informed by advice from key government agencies, independent experts in the field of groundwater and economics, the Department’s social impact assessment and hazards team, public submissions as well as additional public representations outside the exhibition period.

Since the Department received more than 50 unique public submissions objecting to the project during public exhibition, the Independent Planning Commission (the Commission) is the delegated consent authority. The project is therefore referred to the Commission to hold a public hearing into the carrying out of the project (as requested by the then Minister for Planning and Public Spaces in February 2020) prior to determining the development application.

Based on this assessment, the Department considers that the project has been designed in a manner that achieves a practicable balance between maximising resource recovery and minimising associated impacts on the surrounding landholders and the environment through contemporary best practices and mitigation measures.

Overall, the Department considers that the benefits for the local area and to NSW outweigh the residual costs, and that the project is approvable subject to the recommended conditions.

I have attached a copy of the Department's assessment report and recommended conditions of consent for the Commission's consideration.

If you have any questions or wish to arrange a briefing, please contact me on [REDACTED] or at [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely,



Steve O'Donoghue
Director Resource Assessments