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**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

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O/N H-1303914

**INDEPENDENT PLANNING COMMISSION**

**MEETING WITH WOLLONGONG CITY COUNCIL**

**RE: RUSSELL VALE COAL UNDERGROUND EXPANSION PROJECT**

**PANEL:**                      **PROFESSOR ALICE CLARKE (CHAIR)**  
**PROFESSOR CHRIS FELL AM**  
**DR PETER WILLIAMS**

**OFFICE OF THE IPC:**      **BRAD JAMES**

**COUNCIL:**                      **MARK RIORDAN**  
**RON ZWICKER**

**LOCATION:**                      **VIDEO CONFERENCE**

**DATE:**                              **8.35 AM, TUESDAY, 13 OCTOBER, 2020**

## THIS PROCEEDING WAS CONDUCTED BY VIDEO CONFERENCE

5 PROF A. CLARKE: Good morning and welcome. Before we begin, I would like to  
acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet. I'd also like to  
pay my respects to their elders, past and present, and to the elders from other  
communities who may be here today. Welcome to the meeting today. Wollongong  
Coal owns and operates the Russell Vale Colliery located in the Illawarra region,  
approximately eight kilometres north of Wollongong and 70 kilometres south of  
10 Sydney. Wollongong Coal is seeking approval for the Russell Vale underground  
expansion project which involves mining by means of bord and pillar mining  
technique. Wollongong Coal proposes to extract up to 3.7 million tonnes of run-of-  
mine over five years at a production rate that would not exceed one million tonnes of  
product coal per year.

15 My name is Professor Alice Clarke. I am the chair of this IPC panel. Joining me are  
my fellow commissioners, Professor Chris Fell and Dr Peter Williams. Brad James  
and Ben Porges from the Office of Communication are also in attendance. In the  
interest of openness and transparency and to ensure the full capture of information,  
20 today's meeting is being recorded and a full transcript will be produced and made  
available on the Commission's website. This meeting is one part of the  
Commission's decision- making process. It's taking place at the preliminary stage of  
this process and will form one of several sources of information upon which the  
Commission will base its decision. It's important for commissioners to ask questions  
25 of attendees and to clarify issues whenever we consider it appropriate. If you are  
asked a question and are not in a position to answer, please, feel free to take the  
question on notice and provide any additional information in writing which we will  
then put up on our website.

30 I request that all members here today introduce themselves before speaking for the  
first time and for all members to ensure that they do not speak over the top of each  
other to ensure accuracy of the transcript. As you are aware, we are meeting via  
video link and should we experience technical issues or lose connectivity, Brad  
James will place those participants still connected on hold. So, please, stay  
35 connected. If your connection has been lost, please, contact Brad on 9383 2165. The  
meeting will be temporarily adjourned and the transcript will be paused until we can  
reconnect participants. We will now begin. Thank you. I will just rearrange my  
screen here. At this stage, I will hand over to Wollongong City Council members  
there to commence your presentation. Thank you.

40 MR M. RIORDAN: Hi. My name is Mark Riordan. I'm the manager – the  
divisional manager of development assessment certification. My colleague here is  
- - -

45 MR R. ZWICKER: Ron Zwicker, special projects and planning support manager.

MR RIORDAN: We have made a number of submissions on behalf of Council, or coordinated a number of submissions on behalf of Council. We are in – at a position where the Council ..... can communicate is generally satisfied with the reporting conditions proposed in the report that's been published and the information provided to us. It addresses the key concerns Council identified earlier and throughout the process. We hadn't intended in making any further representations to the pack at this point in time but we were looking forward to hearing from other community members and other agencies throughout the hearing process as the more open meeting occurs and whatever other information is – whatever other communications are reported or published and will provide an opportunity – we will likely avail ourselves of the opportunity to make a final submission on any other comments made, if necessary, by the prescribed date.

So, at this stage, we really – it's a watch and listen and open to questions from the pack to ensure that we get a good outcome, an appropriate outcome, for this site and this development proposal. It's taken a long time to get where it has got to. Something reasonable seems to be proposed now. Notwithstanding, there's been some difficulties associated with other approvals on the site which Council is pursuing separately. Over time, it's to do with stockpiling and some other conditional compliance and has been in – worked with the Department on that through its own enforcement arm. But, at this stage, this particular content, this particular application and reporting of conditions, we're signalling satisfaction. But we're open to questions and I'll hand over to my colleague, Ron Zwicker, who is much closer to the assessment and may have some other things to add.

MR ZWICKER: I'm pretty satisfied with the conditions that are proposed. There is a whole series of things that require our consultation which is great. Obviously, as part of that, we will need to liaise with the relevant government department as well, in terms of fine tuning those conditions as we go. But generally satisfied with those. Happy to take questions.

PROF CLARKE: Okay. That's – thank you. Thank you for your comments and for that contribution. Chris, did you have anything that you would like to follow up with Wollongong City Council? Mark and Ron here.

PROF C. FELL: We were very interested – Chris Fell, I'm sorry. We're very interested in the swamps question and the importance that Council would, perhaps, place on those. For the preservation of those.

MR ZWICKER: Yes. It is very important from our councillors' perspective that we try to preserve as many swamps as possible. It was, certainly, a major concern when this application was first being metered as a longwall proposal. Very similar to another mine proposal that's currently going to the IPC. Our Council, certainly, has raised those significant issues from our perspective. We think the board and pillar ..... proposal now is, certainly, a substantially improved outcome. But, obviously, we're not the experts in water so I guess we're relying upon that ..... review that was done to, I guess, alleviate those concerns for us.

PROF FELL: And might I add also, the infrastructure, that is both Mount Ousley Road and the power lines. Do you have any specific comments on those?

5 MR ZWICKER: Clearly, with the bord and pillar, I guess we'll have less subsidence related impacts than previously. It still is, obviously, a concern that we don't have any major fracturing of the road network on Mount Ousley Road. In terms of truck movements, with some likely to affect Mount Ousley because it, basically, is going southwards down Memorial Drive down to the Port so it's really the subsidence related impacts that we'll be concerned about.

10 PROF FELL: Thank you, Chair.

PROF CLARKE: Thank you. Peter, did you have any issues to raise - - -

15 DR P. WILLIAMS: Yes.

PROF CLARKE: - - - or questions for Council?

20 DR WILLIAMS: Yes. Thanks very much, Alice. Peter Williams. Good morning, fellows.

MR ZWICKER: Morning.

25 DR WILLIAMS: The economic benefits. Has council got any view of the economic benefits generated from the proposal, in terms of local economic benefit?

30 MR ZWICKER: Well, obviously, employment generation is probably the most significant for us and the multiply effect from that. I guess, we haven't really put our minds that much on the economics because of, essentially, other than employment generation and the indirect benefits through industry suppliers to the mine, the coal's essentially going off shore to India. So, I guess, it would be employment generation would be our main benefit we can see.

35 DR WILLIAMS: Yes. The – in terms of the local community, the adjoining suburbs of Russell Vale and Corrimal, has there been much – has Council received much in terms of submissions or comment from – itself from residents in relation to potential impacts of the mine or - - -

40 MR ZWICKER: Not really. We've had – look, I'm a member of the CCC so I guess I see firsthand and we've got an active CCC members of about three or four. And other than those members there's been really zero comment from the wider public.

DR WILLIAMS: Right.

45 MR RIORDAN: There's been some concern over some of the historical actions on the mine and - - -

MR ZWICKER: Yes.

MR RIORDAN: - - - responsibility – and the responsibility of the owners and their  
– the pace of which they’ve gone about complying with some past conditions on - - -

5

DR WILLIAMS: Yes.

MR ZWICKER: Yes.

10 MR RIORDAN: - - - past approval. So that’s created some bad blood, so to speak,  
in the community and not heightened the status of the kind of reputation of the  
operator in the local community’s mind, but it’s been moth balls for - - -

MR ZWICKER: 2015. Yes.

15

MR RIORDAN: - - - four years, five years now. If I had to summarise some of the  
issues that came from there in the past, it was the dust. Management of noise, dust  
and - - -

20 MR ZWICKER: Yes.

MR RIORDAN: - - - the vehicle movements - - -

MR ZWICKER: Yes.

25

MR RIORDAN: - - - primarily concerns and they would be, as expected, and we  
have looked closely at what’s proposed and how it’s conditioned and appears to be  
managed and we would expect that to be properly enforced and there is a role for - - -

30 MR ZWICKER: Monitored.

MR RIORDAN: - - - monitor and there’s - - -

MR ZWICKER: Yes.

35

MR RIORDAN: - - - a role for ..... with us in that and we are active on the CCC - - -

DR WILLIAMS: Yes.

40 MR RIORDAN: - - - so we would expect even in the wording of the conditions  
there’s a role for further engagement with us - - -

DR WILLIAMS: Yes.

45 MR RIORDAN: - - - and that would also mean we would take on board community  
issues and concerns. So, the short answer is there is ongoing concern largely around  
– from the community around some of the past approvals and what this approval may

mean in re-visiting some of those anxieties they had in the past. So it is all about management of the operation and we would – we will look closely at the conditions and we think that the conditions that are proposed address the issues we're concerned about on behalf of the residents there.

5

PROF CLARKE: Thank you, Chris.

DR WILLIAMS: Thank you.

10 PROF FELL: Thank you, Chair. Just a question. It's a very short period of mining, five years. I know the mine is largely established but is the rehabilitation side of it to your satisfactory?

15 MR ZWICKER: In terms of our emplacement area at the moment, we're having some difficulties getting Wollongong Coal to undertake the rehab works. So that's an ongoing frustration from Council's perspective. Clearly, this proposal at the moment is suggesting they won't be using the emplacement area anymore so I guess that's a good thing because they've pretty much reached their RL levels on the  
20 previous approval for the emplacement area anyway. So in terms of how they go about the rehab on the mine site itself, I would envisage they will be applying for a further application to extend into Wonga West area which has been signalled several times at the CCC. So I would imagine after they got this, if they get this approval over the line, they would then embark on another EIS for Wonga West which will have significant issues. So I would suggest they probably won't be looking at doing  
25 a lot of rehabilitation after the five year period because they'll be expecting further approval.

PROF FELL: Thank you. Thanks, Chair.

30 PROF CLARKE: Thank you. I had a question related to ground water. In your note from August 2019, you speak about the cumulative – the need to the cumulative impacts of not only the Russell Vale coal mine but other coal mines in the area. Do you have any comments to make further along that issue?

35 MR ZWICKER: Yes. We, obviously, the – when there was a longwall proposal, I guess we were heavily concerned about the subsidence related impacts on our water causes, reservoirs and upland swamps and, obviously, that plus other mines in our LGA with similar proposals we were concerned about the community impact that could occur to our water resources and swamps. And that still remains a concern for  
40 us but we would hope, through this process, appropriate ..... review will be done to satisfy that issue.

PROF CLARKE: Thank you. Peter, did you have any further questions?

45 DR WILLIAMS: Just one, if I may, Alice. I mean, it's not direct development but – well, it is once it's developed because it will have to be conditioned. Council, is

my understanding, negotiating separately with, would it be VPA with the – with Wollongong - - -

5 MR ZWICKER: Yes. That's right. Yes. And the numbers in the draft consent are 338 and the five instalments have been negotiated separately by our strategic planning area of council.

DR WILLIAMS: Right. And Council's happy with that?

10 MR ZWICKER: Yes. Council's happy.

DR WILLIAMS: Yes. Great.

15 MR ZWICKER: Yes.

DR WILLIAMS: Great. Good. Thanks, Ron. Thank you.

MR ZWICKER: No worries.

20 MR RIORDAN: There's a formal – if I can add, a formal process in place of council from ..... and coordinating those sort of discussions and on arrangements for VPAs at, certainly, at arms length.

25 MR ZWICKER: Yes. We're at arms length to that.

MR RIORDAN: From the assessment side of it.

MR ZWICKER: Yes.

30 DR WILLIAMS: Yes. Yes. Thanks, Mark. Thank you. That's all, Alice. Thanks.

PROF CLARKE: Thank you. Chris, any further questions today?

35 PROF FELL: Look, I'm right, thanks, Alice.

PROF CLARKE: Okay. Just one final one from me, looking at the current end of life and the question around ground water build up and discharge from the adit, I'm interested to know if you have any thoughts about that? It is some time in the distance that projection and if you had any comments about where that's sitting now with the proposal?

40 MR ZWICKER: No, I don't, to be honest. I've only just sort of started to think about it but I – maybe, we can follow that up with a response. A proper response ..... process.

45 PROF CLARKE: Thank you.

PROF FELL: I will ask a supplementary on that, if I might, Alice.

PROF CLARKE: Yes, please, Chris.

5 PROF FELL: ..... ground water predictions say, I think it's 2057 but a long time  
after the mine closes, there'll be an added discharge of about 288 ml ..... litres per  
year. The proponent says it will look after that for, I think it's five years, and  
possibly reverse osmose it. Are you generally happy about that if all this comes to  
pass?

10 MR ZWICKER: I think so but, look, I'm not an expert on water, to be honest. I'm  
a town planner that's involved in mining.

15 PROF FELL: It makes your broadly knowledgeable.

MR ZWICKER: Yes. So I'm no expert in that field so I guess would rely on your  
expertise as a group to see if that's satisfactory or not.

20 PROF FELL: Thank you.

PROF CLARKE: Thank you.

25 MR RIORDAN: Yes. Ground water issues and water loss in the catchment, the  
impact on the swamps, the impact on Aboriginal sites, the relationship to adjoining  
land uses, these are all issues that we have commented on in the past and been  
concerned about.

PROF FELL: Yes.

30 MR RIORDAN: And the early mine proposal was very problematic and not  
supported at all by Council. As it's been refined, we've focused more on the areas  
within our immediate prism of – area expertise so we're relying on those other  
experts, as yourselves and the Departments used in part of the assessment or as relied  
upon in the documentation reporting and other submissions from those areas that are  
35 beyond our expertise. But we're, obviously, concerned that if there's a doubt or any  
doubt around the ability to deliver the outcomes and the adequacies of those  
outcomes as proposed, in your mind or anyone else expert in that space, we – that  
would, certainly – we would be very aware – very attentive and concerned also - - -

40 PROF FELL: Thank you.

MR RIORDAN: - - - if those things don't stack up. If I might put it that way.

45 PROF CLARKE: Well, I think you've covered everything that we wanted to ask  
and thank you for comments. I'll just do one last round. If anybody has any other  
questions that they would like to ask, stick your hands up now. Thank you. At this  
stage, then, I'll, you know, formally thank you for your time and joining us today by



this video link. Brad, we'll draw the meeting to a close now and issue the cessation of the transcript and thank you very much, everyone.

5 MR RIORDAN: Thank you, for the opportunity.

MR ZWICKER: Thank you.

PROF FELL: Thank you, gentleman.

10 MR RIORDAN: Bye.

MR JAMES: Thanks Mark, thanks Ron. Yes, I'll let you know when the transcript's available on our website.

15 MR ZWICKER: Yes. All right. Thanks, Brad.

MR RIORDAN: Thank you. See you.

20 MR JAMES: Thank you. Bye.

**MATTER ADJOURNED at 8.56 am INDEFINITELY**