

PROF R. MACKAY: So I'll declare the meeting open. And good morning and welcome. And before we begin, I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet and I would also like to pay my respects to their elders, past, present and emerging. Welcome to this meeting today to discuss the
5 application for Tahmoor South Coal Project, State Significant Development 8445. My name is Professor Richard Mackay and with me is my fellow Commissioner, Professor Chris Fell AO, and we form the panel appointed to determine this application. And joining us from the Office of Independent Planning Commission is our colleague, Lindsey Blecher.

10 In the interests of openness and transparency and to ensure the full capture of information, today's meeting is being recorded and a complete transcript will be produced and made available on the Commission's website. The meeting is one part of the Commission's decision-making process. It is taking place at the preliminary
15 stage of the process and will form one of several sources of information upon which the Commission will base its decision. The meeting has been requested by the Commission panel to enable the panel members to ask questions and to clarify aspects of the application. It is not an opportunity for any party to make a presentation, not to make submissions to the panel. Submissions are welcome from
20 any party, but through a separate process.

Meeting participants are asked to keep any introductory remarks brief and to respond directly to the Commissioners' questions. In addition to any pre-advised questions, the Commissioners may ask additional questions of attendees and if you're asked a
25 question and not in a position to answer, please feel free to take the question on notice and to provide any additional information in writing which we will then also put up on our website. And to ensure the accuracy of the transcript, I request that all participants today introduce themselves before speaking, just by saying their name every time they speak and to ensure that we don't speak on top of each other. So
30 look, we will now begin the meeting. Mr Arthur, would you like to introduce yourself, please.

MR B. ARTHUR: Yes. My name is Barry Arthur. I'm the manager of Environment and Sustainability at Wingecarribee Shire Council.

35 PROF MACKAY: Look, thank you. And the Commission is conscious that this application, you know, relates more to Wollondilly Shire, but also has implications for Wingecarribee. We have received and noted the Council's submission and – but we feel this is – it's an important point in our process to connect directly with
40 Council, so we'd be happy to hear any remarks that Council might care to make, particularly any updates since the last advice from Council to the Department. I think we only have one substantive question, but we'd be happy to hear any other comments or concerns. So could I begin by inviting you to make any preliminary remarks or indicate any updates, please.

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MR ARTHUR: Yes, thank you. It's Barry Arthur speaking and thank you for this opportunity to talk today. I really welcome the opportunity and the meeting. As you said, you've seen our submission. There is no updates after that. The submission on this project is small, compared to some of the submissions we've made to other coal mines, particularly the ones with the bigger footprint in our shire. Just by way of statement of our position, Council has adopted a position or a policy of opposition to longwall mining and any new coal mine in the shire because of its concerns that it has of a potential impact on groundwater, water catchments, agricultural land and tourism. Yes, the project area does extend in to our shire, but we know and we note that none of the mine components or subsidence zones appear to occur in our region, and which I think has been confirmed.

PROF MACKAY: Yes.

MR ARTHUR: Been confirmed by the Department and their proponents. The EIS acknowledged constraints to mining in the southern domain which extends in to our area and so we do acknowledge the efforts by proponents to avoid activity in this area and we do request that the mining activities in this domain remain restricted in to the future, wherever that may possible. One thing that does impact our shire, and it was part of our submission, is the transport of coal products by rail through to Port Kembla. So the coal trains will go through our shire, will cut through our major population centres of Mittagong, Bowral and Moss Vale, as well as our villages of Yerrinbool, Aylmerton, Balaclava and Robertson.

So it does have an interface with the large population of – potentially in our shire, just by result of the – you know, the regular movements of coal through our region. So that's one part – that's one aspect of the application that we did make a comment on. We did ask that covered rail wagons be considered for this project, but I do note, following the response to submissions and also – the Department's report is that there's recommendations for air monitoring and the like, but not supporting the covering of coal wagons which – look, as I said, it is one aspect of the proposal which does interface with a number of our villages and our main towns and it's probably one that has the interface with a large percentage of our shire, so that's something that we still maintain a position on. And that's it for my opening remark, sorry.

PROF MACKAY: No, well – it's Richard Mackay. Thank you. Thank you for that. That's very succinct and very clear and it aligns with the Commission's understanding. The matter that we did want to raise with you is exactly the amenity issue that you've mentioned in relation to air quality and the implications of the transport of the coal by rail through the shire. So could I commence by asking is there kind of any evidence, either by way of example anecdote or data, that suggests that the continuation of the existing practice is going to be problematic. I mean, are there particular stories, complaints, particular affected receivers that would cause a change? I mean, the Commission is conscious that – leaving aside the issue of covered or not covered rail wagons – transportation of the extracted coal by rail has a number of significant benefits over the alternative transport, being by truck and road.

MR ARTHUR: Yes. Barry Arthur speaking. And look, we don't have physical data in terms of air quality monitoring ourselves and we don't collect a lot of complaints from the community. It is a matter that has been raised in our Environment and Sustainability Advisory Committee, which is made up of – it's an advisory committee to Council. It has community representatives on there and it has been a matter that's been raised a number of times over the years, not specifically in relation to this application, but raised by community members. Now, the community members are obviously part of community networks and they are a focal point for community concerns.

10 So it has been raised, in terms of coal transport and covering of coal wagons in the past and when I say in the past, I'm talking, you know, within the last five years. Again, in terms of what we are trying to maintain, in terms of air quality in the region, we do not have local air quality monitoring in this particular region. I think the furthest – the closest air monitoring station is in Bargo, I believe, so there's nothing in this shire. It's obviously clean air and air quality and – is something that's highly valued by our community and that's why it has been raised by our – through that committee as being an aspiration and a concern. So in terms of physical information, I don't have anything, other than that.

20 PROF MACKAY: Look, thank you for that response and clarification. Council's submission is very clear in terms. In the event that Council wanted to put further information before us, such as a copy of the Environment and Sustainability Committee minutes, Council is welcome to do that. That's a matter for Council. We would need to receive it by the 24th of February and we would put it on our website, should we do that. But you've made that position very clear and our clear understanding is that that is the major issue for Wingecarribee Shire Council, with the application that's before the Commission. Now, Professor Fell, I think you had a supplementary.

30 PROF FELL: I think I do. Chris Fell speaking. One of the other problems associated with transport of coal by rail is noise. I just wonder if, in fact, that is a consideration at all.

35 MR ARTHUR: Yes. Barry Arthur speaking. Look, it hasn't been raised in our submission and, for sure, if you ask local residents, you know, they might say it is a level of concern, but I do think, you know, we recognise that a significant rail corridor does go through our region and, you know, obviously a large portion of our community welcomes that, of course. And I don't have a percentage or the ratio of commuter or freight versus coal or any other product, so I can't make that distinction between, you know, noise from this particular area – from this particular project or activity. Any improvements to noise would always be welcome, of course, but again, it's something that we haven't made a note on. The – we – look, freight is going to be an ongoing activity. We have a number of freight going through the region, so it's probably just one of that and I can't make that distinction or quantify it specifically.

PROF FELL: Well, thank you. That's helpful. Chris Fell.

PROF MACKAY: Could I – it's Richard Mackay. Could I just ask, Professor Fell, anything further from you?

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PROF FELL: No, not from me, thanks.

PROF MACKAY: And Mr Blecher, anything further from you?

10 MR L. BLECHER: No, thank you.

PROF MACKAY: Mr Arthur, thank you. I sort of – I think we all realised from the outset that this need not be a particularly long meeting. I think it's nevertheless important, in terms of the Commission's transparent process and serious
15 consideration and engagement with the issues that arise from this application, so we are grateful to Council and to you for the submission and for the clarifications. Before I close the meeting, can I just check whether there's any other concerns or any other comments that you would like to make on behalf of Council.

20 MR ARTHUR: Yes. It's Barry Arthur speaking. And the – one thing I might add is that we – look, we're aware that the project area does extend in to the shire and, you know, should – whatever happens in this application and, you know, what happens in any future applications, if it were to extend in to the shire, we would be making much more considerable response to this. We note that they have made
25 comments in there about constraints to the mining in this particular area which probably allays some of our fears. So whatever the outcome is, it would be – you know, we would definitely advocate, if there was a way of restricting future use in to that southern domain, that would be in line with Council's adopted policy in relation to coal mining. Now, that may be outside the scope, of course, but I think I would
30 just – I thought I'd just mention that, just to make our interests clear.

PROF MACKAY: Right. Well, thank you for that and that's well articulated and it is also very clear at the front end of Council's submission in relation to its position on new mines and longwall mining within the shire. So look, that being the case and
35 there being no other comments, I thank you again because we are genuinely appreciative of the ability to consult and engage directly. It's very helpful to the process. As I mentioned earlier, we now have some public hearings which will take place 15 to 17 February. They are open – they're online but open hearings and any further documents that Council would like to put before us would need to be received
40 by the 24th of February. But I think that being all, I'd just thank all participants for their participation in the meeting and declare the meeting closed.

MR ARTHUR: Yes. Thank you and thank you for the opportunity today. We really appreciate that.

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PROF MACKAY: Thank you.

MATTER ADJOURNED at 11.18 am INDEFINITELY