



ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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NSW Department of Planning & Infrastructure
Level 2, Price Waterhouse Coopers Centre
26 Honeysuckle Drive
Newcastle NSW 2300

Via email: plan_comment@planning.nsw.gov.au

To Whom It May Concern:

Re: Draft Terms of Reference for a Strategic Assessment of a Biodiversity Plan for Coal Mining in the Upper Hunter Valley, NSW

The Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (GBMWhA) Advisory Committee has been appointed jointly by Commonwealth and State Environment Ministers to advise on matters relating to the protection, conservation, presentation and management of the GBMWhA. The GBMWhA was inscribed in the World Heritage List on the basis of its outstanding natural values.

The Advisory Committee thanks the Department of Planning and Infrastructure for the opportunity to make comment on the Draft Terms of Reference for a Strategic Assessment of a Biodiversity Plan for Coal Mining in the Upper Hunter Valley.

The GBMWhA contains outstanding examples of ongoing ecological and biological processes significant in the evolution of Australia's highly diverse ecosystems and communities of plants and animals, and significant natural habitats for the in situ conservation of biodiversity, including the eucalypts and eucalypt dominated communities and many rare and threatened plants and animals. The Advisory Committee is concerned that developments, both within and on lands surrounding the GBMWhA, should not impact detrimentally on these World Heritage values and has an important role in advising on the planning and management of the World Heritage area. Representatives from the Advisory Committee have reviewed the exhibition material and the Advisory Committee offers the following submission for consideration in the finalisation of the terms of reference.

By way of background, the Advisory Committee has an established and ongoing interest in the potential effects of coal mining on the World Heritage values of the Greater Blue Mountains and notes that the area to be investigated by the proposed strategic assessment includes part of the Wollemi National Park, one of the eight reserves of the GBMWhA. The Advisory Committee is currently progressing a National Heritage Values assessment of the GBMWhA and adjacent areas, as a precursor to formal consideration by the Australian Heritage Council and potential renomination to the World Heritage List.



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NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service



Specifically, the Advisory Committee requests that potential coal mining impacts on the GBMWhA and its outstanding universal value be reviewed in the strategic assessment, together with an assessment of opportunities for maintaining and improving the protection and management of the World Heritage Area.

The Advisory Committee would be happy to make appropriate personnel available for a formal briefing and further consultation during the process of preparing the proposed Biodiversity Plan and the strategic assessment.

The Advisory Committee recommends the following specific matters for inclusion in the terms of reference:

1. Biodiversity offsetting principles in the proposed Biodiversity Plan should be specified, especially when potential areas for offsetting may adjoin or be located within the World Heritage Area.
2. Studies should have regard to World Heritage and other heritage values. These values extend beyond the biodiversity values for which the area is listed, and include Aboriginal heritage, historic heritage, geodiversity and a range of other values.
3. Consideration should be given to the necessity for an appropriate buffer around the World Heritage Area to prevent adverse impacts and to provide opportunities to improve management boundaries. Habitat connectivity to World Heritage Area is an important consideration and extends across the full scope of biodiversity, not only listed threatened species or migratory species.
4. Consultation should occur with the Advisory Committee and with our 'Aboriginal Reference Group' in relation to the Biodiversity Plan prior to the finalisation of any matters in the Plan affecting the World Heritage Area.

Should you or your staff require further information, please contact our Executive Officer, Jacqueline Reid via email to jacqueline.reid@environment.nsw.gov.au or by telephone to 4784 7326.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Mackay". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, sweeping 'R' and 'M'.

Prof Richard Mackay, AM
Chair
Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area Advisory Committee

05/07/2013