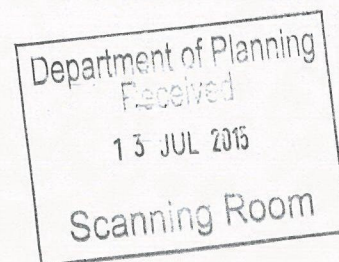


PCU060491

Executive Director
Resource and Industry Policy
Department of Planning & Environment
GPO Box 39
SYDNEY NSW 2001



9 July 2015

Dear Sir

Draft Integrated Mining Policy

I refer to the public exhibition of the documents associated with the first stage of improving mining regulation in New South Wales.

Firstly, the NSW Government is commended on this initiative to better manage the balance between mining and community impacts. Also the making of mining regulation and the processes under which mining proposals are assessed and determined easier to understand, is also supported.

The Gunnedah district has an extensive history of mining activity and more recently has been the focus of considerable development and proposed development of coal mining within the Gunnedah Coal Basin.

In terms of the specific components of the Draft Integrated Mining Policy the following comments are provided.

- **Preliminary Environmental Assessment (PEA)**

It is appreciated that a PEA is designed to enable stakeholders to gain a clear understanding of what is proposed by the development in a qualitative form without detailed technical discussion.

Whilst the PEA will inform the various stakeholders of the outline of the development proposal it is important to reinforce that the information provided is information with limited technical detail.

It is apparent that some members in the community have the perception that such documents provide the complete basis of a proposal. Accordingly the limitations on the level of information provided in the PEA should be reinforced in the policy.

- **Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirement**

In terms of the Secretary Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARS), the new standard SEARS are generally supported. Certainly, the assessment of Environmental Protection Licences and Mining Licences being conducted at the same time as the Development Application is seen as a positive move.

- **Assessment Bilateral Agreement**

The new Assessment Bilateral Agreement with the Commonwealth relative to processes to assess action under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 is seen as a common-sense approach that will hopefully avoid duplication and remove a second tier in the determination process.

- **Economic Assessment**

The issue of economic assessment of mining and coal seam gas proposals has been of concern to Council for many years. Certainly there is a need for consistency in the approach to this assessment but also the level of analysis needs to directly relate to the local community. In many instances economic analysis considers broad parameters with little specific local detail that will help decision makers in the immediate community affected by the development.

Further, the economic assessment must analyse the closer impact of such developments, be that at the exhaustion of the resource or due to other circumstances during the development's operation. These impacts are often devastating on local communities and local economics and as such need to be examined in detail and mitigating measures clearly articulated.

- **Planning Assessments**

The introduction of a consistent framework to guide the development of Planning Assessments is also welcomed. Council has previously commented to NSW Planning and Environment on the development of Planning Agreements suggesting that a more holistic approach be taken through involvement of the development, local authorities and the NSW Government to address development impact. In this regard, local, regional and post development impacts can be addressed providing some degree of certainty for Councils and local communities.

- **Biodiversity Offsets Fund**

The establishment of a Biodiversity Offsets Fund is viewed as a move that will assist in ensuring that developers do meet their obligations in terms of biodiversity offsets. Clearly the success of the optional payment into the fund will be the actual delivery and maintenance of offsets from the funds. The implementation of programs from this fund will require considerable resources.

Developers may simply pay into the fund to satisfy their obligation for offset provision. The level of payment must a level to ensure that the offset can be sustained in perpetuity and resulting in a future financial burden on the community.

- **Water Regulation**

Finally, providing the community with a clear and readily understandable outline of the government's regulation on water issues is long overdue. It is apparent that water security is the major issue in this region. Accordingly, the better informed the community is on this critical environmental issue, the better for all concerned, be that developer, mining company, farmer or urban dweller.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the exhibited documents.

Please contact Council's Director Planning & Environmental Services, Mr Michael J Silver should further information on the above comments be required.

Yours faithfully



Eric Groth
GENERAL MANAGER

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Reference: 865507
ms:vg

cc: NSW Mining Related Councils