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**Our Ref:** 18/00177

**Your Ref:**



16 February 2018

Ms Carolyn McNally  
The Secretary  
NSW Department of Planning & Environment  
GPO Box 39  
Sydney NSW 2001

Dear Carolyn,

**Re: Singleton Council Submission – Discussion paper to  
Improve Rehabilitation Outcomes for Major Mining  
Developments**

### Background

The Singleton Local Government Area (LGA) is situated mid Hunter Valley in the midst of the Hunter Coal Fields. There are open cut and underground mining operations, including buffer land and off set land, owned by various mining companies which comprise approximately 115,000 hectares of land in the LGA. The extent of mine owned land presents a very significant challenge for Singleton in ensuring that there is a plan for parallel and future land use which is also cognisant of economic and social considerations. Singleton's economy is currently incredibly heavy reliant on mining and when it diminishes there will be a significant impact on the LGA.

### Issues

- There is a need for a more systems based approach to post mining land use which is integrated with local and regional plans, including comprehensive community engagement.
- More specifically the Paper seems to be more focused on localised operational outcomes for the miner and doesn't seek to draw upon a strategic approach on a sub regional/local level.
- The development of local/sub regional strategic end use/economic outcomes/landscape plans are imperative. It is acknowledge that the Department of Premiers and Cabinet is leading a review of the Synoptic Plan.
- The State should actively commit to this strategic planning as a policy position with timeframe and resources.

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- As part of mine planning and approvals, at the project inception stage, the proponent should undertake the resource assessment against the desirable strategic outcomes sought in the strategy which are integrated into the project, to ensure the early identification of parallel and future post mining land uses.
- Consent conditions should seek funding to enable research, planning, works and promotion of the mine site for parallel and post mining land use. This shouldn't be left to local government and should be held until an agreed land use is achieved. This approach would ensure adequate funding and importance is placed on planning for when mining is being undertaken and concluded in the LGA and the need to undertake significant economic adjustment, social change planning and the execution of agreed and funded economic and social readjustment/transition programs.
- These above issues need to be part of the DRE ongoing oversight.
- There would be merit in linking the community aspect of mining impacts to the consultation outcomes from the Community Strategic Planning process required by councils under the Local Government Act. The relationship between the two local processes has been captured in the reform of the EP&A Act which provides greater legislative weight to local planning statements taking into consideration the outcomes of IP&R under the LG Act. Whilst the DPE are responsible for the determination of major projects, such as mining, these are assessed in an isolated, case by case manner.
- The community expectation is that there will be a greater level of coherence, which is reflected in our community's concerns around final voids, short, medium and long term economic development and diversification. This is difficult to plan for in a coherent way under both the Local Government Act and the EP&A Act when the largest landholder in the Singleton LGA is the mining industry.
- The Strategic Planning Statement requirements under the reformed EP&A Act will require local governments to have strategic planning outcomes for all land uses. How this integrates with this guideline is not clear, and should be a consideration in the development of such a guideline. It is considered that rehabilitation and closure proposals should not only integrate and be compatible with surrounding landscapes and landforms, however, the policy should do so in a highest and best use manner that is consistent with the strategic planning principles and outcomes in a local strategic planning statement.

We are fully aware of the submission that has been made by the Association of Mining and Energy Related Councils and are supportive of that submission.

Singleton Council appreciates the opportunity to make this submission and would be pleased to discuss it further with the Department.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'J' followed by a horizontal line and a small loop at the end.

**Jason Linnane**  
General Manager