

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

PROPOSED TAILING DAMS AT CAMBERWELL COAL MINE, SINGLETON - AMENDMENT OF CONSENT

BACKGROUND

On 19 March 1990 the former Minister for Planning gave conditional consent under Section 101 to the Camberwell Coal Mine. There were no objectors to the proposal.

INTRODUCTION

On 24 February 1992 an application under Section 102 was received from Camberwell Coal Pty Limited to modify the development consent to permit the construction of three tailings dams and operation of the respective pondages to contain, fine coal washery reject slurries, delivered by pipeline from the Coal Preparation Plant. The tailings dams would have a capacity of 8478 kcm sufficient for the life of the mine (up to 20 years).

Since commissioning of the Camberwell Coal Mine the proponent unsuccessfully has attempted underground disposal of slurries to old underground workings on site. Further, it is understood that no permission from the Department of Mineral Resources would be forthcoming for the development of an underground mine entry to gain access to such workings to carry out underground stowage.

THE PROPOSAL

The proponent seeks to construct nine tailings dams in its overburden disposal area (see Figures 1 and 2). The ponds would operate for 20 years. Existing water management controls and bunding would satisfactorily protect the environment. All decant water would be re-used. Dust emissions are not significant.

The tailings dams would be 18 to 32m in height and as such would need to be reviewed by the Dams Safety Committee. Relevant information on design, operation, monitoring would be reviewed by that agency.

The tailings dam, on completion would be rehabilitated by covering with rock mulch and topsoil and revegetating the covering material. The Soil Conservation Service as an agent of the Department of Mineral Resources, would oversight the rehabilitation. A pipeline of 150-200mm diameter would deliver the fines slurry to the site from the Coal Preparation Plant.

VIEWS OF COUNCIL

The Singleton Shire Council supports the proposal in principle but suggested that the proposal be considered as a medium-term solution, rather than a long term one.

CONSIDERATION

The Department reviewed the application and supports the proposal on the basis of a limited life option for fines disposal and its siting in a disposal area of the colliery. A limit of 20 years is recommended for the proposal, with regular reporting of investigations of alternative disposal options such as small sized combined reject pumping to disposal areas on site. The water management works and water pollution controls already installed are adequate for the project. The design of the tailings dam has been reviewed by the Dams Safety Committee. The Department's inspection of the conceptual design suggests it is likely to comply with the requirements of the responsible agencies.

RECOMMENDATION

The Department recommends that the proposed tailings dams be approved on the basis of the submitted information and subject to conditions including the requirements of the responsible government agencies.

It is recommended that the Minister sign the Notice of Amendment enclosed (tabbed 'A').

AGREED

MINISTER

B Adams
B Adams
Manager
Assessments & Resources Branch

N Apitz
N Apitz
Assistant Director

Endorsed
Rob Lawes
15/4/92

16/4/92.