

Contact Name: Mr Waid Crockett  
Contact No: (02) 6540 1126  
Our Reference: OUT-9373/17



17 July 2017

Department of Planning and Environment  
GPO Box 39  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Sir/Madam

### **Submission to the Mount Pleasant Coal Mine Modification 3**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposal by MACH Energy Australia Pty Ltd for the Mount Pleasant Coal Mine Modification 3 project.

The Upper Hunter Shire Council, (Council) acknowledges that the Mount Pleasant mining lease area is located wholly within the boundaries of an adjoining local government area. However, the Council feels compelled to make a submission and again highlight the cumulative impacts of coal mining which extend at a regional scale and far beyond the boundaries of this and other mining operations within the Muswellbrook Shire.

The Council accepts that mining is an important economic driver for the region, but this should not come at the expense of other already established agricultural activities and rural industries which depend on fertile soils, clean water and pristine vistas. The Council was successful in arguing that open cut coal mining was incompatible with many established rural industries, particularly the Equine Industry which was noted in the rejection of the Bickham Coal Mine proposal.

The Council has previously made detailed submissions to the Department of Planning and Environment and NSW Government on the regional impacts of coal and coal seam gas mining. In these submissions we have highlighted the regional importance of the Equine and Viticulture Industries in the Upper Hunter, the wealth and social cohesion derived from agricultural production, the potential for expansion of emerging tourism opportunities and the need to protect the natural ecology and biodiversity of the area. The Council accepts the reality of continued mining in the Hunter but not at the expense of a strong and diverse agricultural sector or at the long term disadvantage of other emerging opportunities which will provide a more sustainable future.

In March 2015, Council adopted a revised Position Statement on Coal and Coal Seam Gas Activities, a copy of which is attached. The Position Statement makes it clear that Council is committed to protecting the wider equine industry and therefore the gazetted Equine Critical Industry Cluster in our region by opposing coal mining developments that have the potential to adversely impact upon those major thoroughbred breeding farms located outside the Shire.

#### **All correspondence to:**

General Manager | Upper Hunter Shire Council | PO Box 208, Scone NSW 2337

Phone: Scone Office 6540 1100 | Merriwa Office 6521 7000 | Murrurundi Office 6540 1350

Email: [council@upperhunter.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@upperhunter.nsw.gov.au)



**UPPERHUNTER.NSW.GOV.AU**



Of particular relevance to the Mount Pleasant Coal Mine Modification 3 project are parts of our position statement, which although makes reference to the PAC's final determination on the Drayton South project, does in our view have an important nexus to other mining applications:

*"On the evidence the Commission agrees that Coolmore and Darley Studs are at the 'epicentre' of the thoroughbred breeding industry in NSW and Australia. They are 'pivotal' to the sustainability of the Upper Hunter Critical Industry Cluster [CIC] because of their size and market share. They are the largest international scale thoroughbred studs in Australia and have economic and reputational significance to the region, NSW and Australia. The commission supports the recommendation of the PAC Review and the Gateway Panel report that both studs should be afforded the highest level of protection".*

The position statement goes onto state:

*"The Council recognises that these major industry representatives, although contained within our neighbouring Shire, are integral components that make up the critical mass of what has been recognised by the NSW State government as the Hunter Equine Critical Industry Clusters contained within the Upper Hunter and Muswellbrook Local Government Area's".*

The Council is of the view that exclusion zones remain the simplest and most effective means of easing land use tensions, offering protection to sustainable agricultural industries from the impacts of mining, providing greater certainty to all industries and providing for an economically diverse range of industries. Regions in Kentucky-USA, Newmarket-England and Lower Normandy-France have all had planning instruments developed that ensure the protection of their agricultural industries and environmental amenity from the imposition of all conflicting developments. Such exclusion zones could prevent the types of land use conflict that we are currently seeing between mining and agricultural industries in the Hunter Valley and provide these industries with greater investment certainty into the future.

Council is concerned that Mount Pleasant is one of three open cut coal mining projects being actively pursued by their proponents which neighbour one another and are in close proximity to the township of Aberdeen, these being MACH Energy's Mount Pleasant project, Australian Pacific's Dartbrook project and Idemitsu's West Muswellbrook project. This represents a significant intensifying of open cut mining in an area where surface mining has never previously taken place. The impacts of five open cut pits contained within three neighbouring projects are likely to be severe.

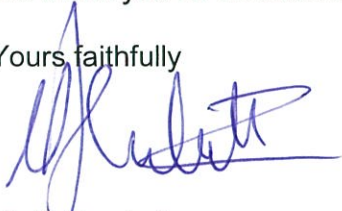
Council is also concerned that despite many promises there is still no Cumulative Impact Methodology by which the cumulative impacts of these three projects can be assessed. Instead these projects will be assessed in an ad-hoc manner and any cumulative impacts won't be considered.

There are already recorded exceedances by the EPA's Air Quality Monitoring Network in the proposed region of works and whose numbers can only be exasperated by the addition of large tracts of exposed lands which come as a necessity of open-cut mining. The best practice dust mitigation procedures will not stop the increase in exceedances and potential cease-work orders upon operations within the vicinity. Council requests that any EIS taken out for this project must be made to consider the cumulative impacts of their works upon the whole region.

Aberdeen is a town built upon a western facing slope, many of the residences in the town cannot fail to be impacted by a profound loss of visual amenity to both this project and the Dartbrook project. Aberdeen will also likely suffer from air, noise and light pollution.

We thank you for consideration of this submission.

Yours faithfully



Waid Crockett  
GENERAL MANAGER