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**Health**  
Hunter New England  
Local Health District

11 November 2011

Megan Webb  
Senior Planner  
NSW Planning Assessment Commission  
GPO Box 3415  
Sydney NSW 2001

Dear Ms Webb

### **WARKWORTH COAL MINE EXTENSION PROJECT PROPOSAL**

I refer to the Warkworth Mining Limited Warkworth Coal Mine Extension Project which includes proposal to:

- Extend the two main open cut pits (North and West Pits) to the west,
- Complete mining and then fill and rehabilitate other smaller open cut pits (CD, South and Woodlands Pits); and
- Transfer overburden between Warkworth Mine and Mount Thorley Mine.

The Warkworth Coal Mine is an existing mine located approximately 15 kilometres southwest of Singleton in the Hunter Valley. Analysis of meteorological data shows that the most common winds on an annual basis are from the north-northwest and the south-southeast. Whilst the most common winds do not follow a direction from the Warkworth Mine Site to Singleton, it is considered that the increased footprint of mine workings will contribute additional particulate matter to air quality in the Hunter Valley air-shed. It would be appropriate for assessment of the cumulative impacts of the Warkworth Coal Mine extension project to be considered in the determination of this proposal. ✓

It is noted in the EIS that predicted impacts of the proposed Warkworth Coal Mine Extension in relation to PM<sub>10</sub> 24-hour Office of Environment & Heritage criterion of 50µg/m<sup>3</sup> at the 100<sup>th</sup> percentile will be exceeded for some receivers in relatively close proximity to the mine from 51 to 179 days per annum. This will significantly increase their health risks of residents in the proximity of these receivers.

The proposal indicates that blasting is typically undertaken daily and during daylight hours. The EIS does not specify if this is 7 days/week or on weekdays only. Also the specification of daylight hours is of some concern, particularly in daylight savings periods where it is light until approximately 9:00 pm at the peak of summer. It is considered that further detail in relation to blasting such as specific time periods, days and number of blasts per day be provided before assessment of blasting in association with the extension proposal can be properly considered and determined. As weather conditions are unpredictable in the Valley resulting in incomplete combustion of blasts and resulting

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detrimental nitrous oxide emissions, it would be important for a full range of mitigation strategies including the choice of explosives to be more thoroughly delineated.

Thirteen receivers to the west and 26 receivers to the north and east of the Warkworth Coal Mine Extension are to be exposed to predicted noise levels that exceed operational criteria. The extension project proposal indicates that the predicted noise levels are not considered to be significantly above the criteria and therefore there is unlikely to be a trigger of acquisition provisions. However, it unclear in the EIS what level of exceedance was considered significant.

There are seven receivers with predicted exposure to noise levels from the extension project proposal that exceed acquisition criteria. It is unclear in the EIS that acquisition will occur and if it does so, that it will result in properties actually being acquired and remaining unoccupied. There is also one receiver with predicted exposure to noise levels from the extension project proposal that exceed acquisition criteria. This one receiver is not within the Zone of Acquisition. The EIS is unclear in what will be done for this receiver to minimise/mitigate impact of noise.

The proposed mine extension will have significant impact on the aesthetics of the environment with Saddleback Ridge to be mined through. Currently, extensive ground disturbance through open cut mining operations has impacted on the surrounding country side in the area. The extension proposal will also result in the loss of Wallaby Scrub Road which will require some residents to use alternative and longer routes to access properties. Loss of aesthetically pleasing landscape and route of access are likely to profoundly impact on the health and wellbeing of residents in the area. There is no indication of whether these losses and inconvenience will be addressed in an attempt to mitigate likely detrimental mental health effects.

Whilst it is noted in the Warkworth Coal Mine extension proposal that Aboriginal community engagement has taken place, it has come to the attention of this office that some Aboriginal people are concerned with expansion of the footprint of the mine. Should the proposal proceed and inadvertently impact on sites of Aboriginal cultural heritage, then the impact on wellbeing of Aboriginal people would be considered intolerable. Assurance of protection of Aboriginal culture and heritage sites needs to be clearly demonstrated in the proposal to prevent mental anguish for local Custodians.

The potential impacts of the Warkworth Coal Mine Extension Proposal need to be clearly assessed, reported and considered with a view to ensuring that the net cumulative impacts on the health and wellbeing of residents are not adverse should the proposal proceed. It is the view of this office that there is insufficient information provided and that the proposal should not currently proceed.

Should you require any additional information, please contact Mr Philippe Porigneaux, Environmental Health Manager on 4924 6494.

Yours sincerely

Dr David Durrheim  
**Service Director - Health Protection**  
**Hunter New England Population Health**