



OUT14/15844

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Dear Ms Kirton

**Springvale Mine Extension Project
Environmental Impact Statement**

I refer to your email of 10 April 2014 regarding the application by Springvale Coal Pty Ltd for its Springvale Mine Extension Project.

NSW Trade & Investment, Regional Infrastructure & Services, Division of Resources & Energy (DRE) has reviewed the *Springvale Mine Extension Project Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) dated April 2014* and provides the following comments which are directed at specific areas of DRE's responsibility for this proposal.

DRE is satisfied the Springvale Mine Extension Project, as outlined in the EIS will effectively utilise the valuable energy resources within Springvale Colliery. Expected environmental impacts have been assessed and are considered to be acceptable. Community impacts are expected to be relatively low and are broadly consistent with existing operations. Economic and employment benefits will be significant, particularly on a regional level.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Springvale Coal (the applicant) is applying for approval for the ongoing operation and expansion of the Springvale Colliery extracting up to 4.5 million tonnes per year of coal using longwall mining techniques. The Project will utilise existing infrastructure as well as construct and operate supporting surface infrastructure for ventilating and dewatering the mine. The extracted coal will supply both the domestic and export markets. The Project will continue to provide employment to 280 staff and up to 70 contractors, and create up to an additional 30 positions.

The proposed mining expansion area underlies the Newnes Plateau, which is dominated by "narrow gorges with high undulating ridgelines and steep sided slopes of sandstone cliffs, which range between 10 and 40m in height. The

Wolgan River, Cox's River and Colo River are the main catchments in the region".

The mine design has been planned to minimise impacts to sensitive surface features, including avoiding these features where feasible.

MINING TITLE

As coal is a prescribed mineral under the *Mining Act 1992*, the proponent is required to hold appropriate mining titles from DRE in order to mine this mineral. The project area is within mining titles held by the company and extends into the company's Exploration Licence 6317. The company will submit a mining lease application for the right to mine within the exploration license area.

It should be noted that a Mining Lease cannot be granted without a relevant approval under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1997*.

Under the *Mining Act 1992*, mining and rehabilitation are regulated by conditions included in the mining lease, including requirements for the submission of a Mining Operations Plan (MOP) and a Subsidence Management Plan (SMP) prior to the commencement of operations, and subsequent Annual Environmental Management Reports (AEMR).

The proponent should be aware that ESG3: Mining Operations Plan (MOP) Guidelines dated September 2013 are available on the DRE website at:

http://www.resourcesandenergy.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0009/475434/ESG3-Mining-Operations-Plan-MOP-Guidelines-September-2013.pdf

SUBSIDENCE

DRE's advice in relation to proposed longwall operations at Springvale Colliery for the extension project is relevant only to mine subsidence issues related to built features, public safety and potential instability of cliff formations or steep slopes.

After reviewing the EIS, DRE is of the view that risks of mine subsidence related to the above-mentioned subsidence issues are similar to those at the mine's current mining operation and should be manageable through the Extraction Plan process.

LIFE OF MINE AND REHABILITATION

A Decommissioning and Rehabilitation Strategy has been prepared and included in Appendix P. Principles and objectives of the Rehabilitation Strategy are supported. All areas will be returned to woodland or to water management areas.

The Rehabilitation processes will be expanded further in the forthcoming Mining Operations Plan.

GENERAL

Exploration

Section 4.2 of the EIS covers proposed exploration. The level of detail does not clearly identify whether there is likely to be a significant impact or provide commitment to avoid sensitive areas identified in proposed studies. There is also no estimate of the number or location of holes to be drilled.

Environmental Management Plans

Environmental Management Plans, as listed in Table 3.7, will be updated for the project. It is expected that the Department of Planning and Environment will require preparation of standard plans as part of the approval conditions.

Mining Operations Plan

The existing Mining Operations Plan (MOP) will need to be replaced by a new MOP.

Rehabilitation Outcomes

It is noted that all rehabilitation areas will now be either Woodland or Water Management Area. The draft EIS had an additional category for Grassland. It is unclear why the grassland rehabilitation outcome has been removed as it would appear to have been an appropriate final land cover for sections of the pit top site.

While the return to woodland is supported by DRE, it is worth noting that the site would appear to be ideal for a light industrial use in the future and the woodland land use may subsequently change through a future development consent.

Monitoring

Additional monitoring sites relating to surface water, groundwater, flora and fauna will be reviewed and considered by DRE when reviewing the forthcoming Subsidence Management Plan.

EIS Quality

While generally well written and comprehensive, the EIS has some inconsistencies which include;

- statements regarding depth of cover (in Section 8.2 cover is referenced at between 300m and 430m, while other sections clearly show and state depth of cover between 180 and 420m),
- conflicting numbering reference for the Burrallow Formation (AQ5 or AQ6?)
- the area of land clearing (11.44ha or 11.8ha – both stated on page 441).
- It is noted that the final sentence on Page 456 states the final landform will comprise the domains of Woodland, Grassland and a Water Management Area. However, in the previous section 'Rehabilitation Outcomes', Grassland has now been removed from the post mining rehabilitation outcomes.
- Domain 2 in Table 10.49 indicates Domain 2 as a Water Management Area, while previously this has been referred to as Domain 3.

RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS

DRE recommends the following conditions to be incorporated into any development consent that may be granted for this proposal:

Exploration

Proposed exploration activities must be notified to DRE and, where applicable, to the Forestry Corporation of NSW including copies of due diligence assessments and site assessments where available. Exploration must not commence until appropriate approvals and/or consents have been obtained from these agencies.

Rehabilitation Objectives and Commitments

The Proponent shall rehabilitate the site to the satisfaction of the Secretary of the Department of Trade and Investment, or his delegate.

Rehabilitation must be substantially consistent with the Rehabilitation Objectives described in the EIS, the Statement of Commitments in Chapter 11 of the EIS and the following objectives in Table 1.

Table 1

Rehabilitation Feature	Objective
Mine site (as a whole of the disturbed land and water)	Safe, stable and non-polluting, fit for the purpose of the intended post-mining land use(s).
Rehabilitation materials	Materials (including topsoils, substrates and seeds of the disturbed areas) are recovered, appropriately managed and used effectively as resources in the rehabilitation.
Landforms	Final landforms sustain the intended land use for the post-mining domain(s). Final landforms are consistent with and complement the topography of the surrounding region to minimise the visual prominence of the final landforms in the post mining landscape. Final landforms incorporate design relief patterns and principles for consistent with natural drainage.
Water Quality	Water retained on site is fit for the intended land use(s) for the post-mining domain(s). Water discharged from site is consistent with the baseline ecological, hydrological and geomorphic conditions of the creeks prior to mining disturbance. Water management is consistent with the regional catchment management strategy.
Native flora and fauna habitat and corridors	Size, locations and species of native tree lots and corridors are established to sustain biodiversity habitats. Species are selected that re-establishes and complements regional and local biodiversity.

Progressive Rehabilitation

The proponent shall carry out all surface disturbing activities in a manner that, as far as is reasonably practicable, minimises potential for dust emissions and shall carry out rehabilitation of disturbed areas progressively, as soon as reasonably practicable, to the satisfaction of the Secretary of the Department of Trade and Investment, or his delegate.

Rehabilitation Plan

The Proponent must prepare and implement a Rehabilitation Plan. The Plan must:

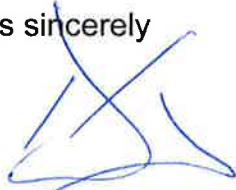
- be submitted to and approved by the Secretary or his delegate prior to carrying out any surface disturbing activities of the development;
- be prepared in accordance with DRE guidelines and in consultation with the Department, Office of Environment and Heritage, Environmental Protection Authority, NSW Office of Water, Lithgow City Council and the mine Community Consultative Committee;
- incorporate and be consistent with the rehabilitation objectives in the EIS, the statement of commitments and Table 1;
- integrate and build on, to the maximum extent practicable, the other management plans required under this approval; and,
- address all aspects of mine closure and rehabilitation, including post mining land use domains, rehabilitation objectives, completion criteria and rehabilitation monitoring and management.

Note: An approved Mining Operations Plan (which will become the REMP once the Mining Act Amendments have commenced), required as a condition of the Mining Lease(s) issued in relation to this project, will satisfy the requirements of this condition for a Rehabilitation Plan.

DRE supports the Springvale Mine Extension Project.

Should you have any enquires regarding this matter please contact Vince Fallico, Project Officer, Industry Coordination on 8281 7340.

Yours sincerely



Adrian Delany
Director Industry Coordination

6.6.14