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Letter of Support for Project from MWRC



MID-WESTERN REGIONAL COUNCIL

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8 August 2017

The Hon Anthony Roberts MP
Minister for Planning
52 Martin Place
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Minister

SUBJECT: BYLONG COAL PROJECT (SSD 6367)

We appreciate your time in meeting with us today in relation to the Bylong Coal Project (SSD 6367).

The primary purpose of our meeting is to emphasise the strategic significance of the Bylong Coal Project for the Mid-Western Region and to express on behalf of the local community the importance of expediting the determination of this major project application, thereby ending the uncertainty surrounding the future of the project.

Local Support

We cannot emphasise enough how important this project is to the economic and social viability of the Region. More specifically, the ability of the communities of Bylong and Kandos to survive in the future depend on the approval of the Bylong Coal project. The closure of Kandos Cement and the Charbon Coal Mine in recent years has left a major void which the Bylong Coal Project can fill. The Bylong Coal Project can also help address the record levels of unemployment and very low socio-economic levels experienced in this area.

The local support for the project was evident at the recent PAC hearing, where more than 85% of those who addressed the PAC spoke in favour of it. Those in favour of the project represented local families, local farmers, local businesses and local school students for whom the Bylong Coal Project represents a genuine opportunity for a bright and prosperous future.

A Proud History of Mining

Mining has played a significant role in the history and ongoing development of the Mid-Western Region, from the early gold rush days through to the major coal mining projects of today. This has allowed the Region to establish a strong competitive advantage in mining. This includes a large local labour force, local businesses specialised in mining and a significant investment in mining equipment and infrastructure.

The Bylong Coal Project has the capacity to build upon this history and achieve economies of scale by being within close proximity of current projects with access to a skilled labour force and established infrastructure.

Mining and Agriculture

A key focus for Council is maintaining a strong and diverse economy. This Region has proven over a long period of time that it is possible to successfully balance the needs of the key industry sectors of mining, agriculture and tourism.

The local mining companies in the Region have been instrumental in ensuring that their activities are considerate of other industries operating in the Region and that where possible any negative impacts are mitigated. This has been achieved through fostering good relationships with Council and the community. Council has no doubt that Kepco will demonstrate the same level of commitment to the Region if the Bylong Coal Project proceeds.

As local mining companies have sought to minimise the volatility that comes with mining, they have increasingly diversified their activities in the Region to include strong agricultural interests. All of the current mining companies in the Region employ farming staff who maintain agricultural land and significant stock levels, which further assists in strengthening the local economy. Recent rehabilitation activities have been successful, providing evidence that mined land can be returned in a better state than it was originally found.

Merits of the Project

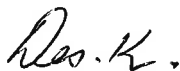
NSW Department of Planning & Environment's assessment report concludes that the Bylong Coal Project is approvable with conditions. Council supports this assessment and as Minister for Planning we urge you to end the uncertainty in relation to the Bylong Coal Project by approving this project.

Whilst Council recognises and respects the role played by the PAC in the consideration of major project applications such as the Bylong Coal Project, it is acutely aware that this process significantly extends the assessment timeframes. In terms of the communities of Bylong and Kandos, the project covers coal exploration authorisations that were originally granted in the early 1980's, so this has been going on for many years.

There are businesses, workers and families that are hanging in the balance awaiting the approval of the Bylong Coal Project. Unfortunately, there are many that will not survive unless this approval is forthcoming.

Once again thank you for the opportunity to meet with you today. If you wish to discuss this matter in further detail, please do not hesitate to contact my office on 02 6378 2850.

Yours sincerely,



DES KENNEDY
MAYOR