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Executive Director, –
Planning NSW -Dept. Energy & Resources.

Ref: Mangoola Coal Continued Operations – EIS No. SSD-8642

Dear Sir,

As an Upper Hunter resident, I wish to express support for the continued operation of Mangoola Coal as outlined in SSD-8642. I have selectively studied sections of the proposal which I have downloaded from the Internet. (I am unable to take in the complete data of the report as it is too complex)

I am a tertiary educated research agronomist/farm director (now retired), who has spent a professional career of around six decades on the North West Slopes and Plains of NSW, including 33 years with the University of Sydney. As a result I have wide experience in grain production, livestock production and husbandry (both cattle and sheep) irrigation, and sustainable agriculture generally. I was also involved for many years in the Landcare movement. I received the Donald medal for my contribution to Australian agronomy in the Year 2000. I was made a member of the Order of Australia for my national contribution to Agriculture and Conservation in the year 2006.

I am now a resident of the Upper Hunter and still maintain an active interest in sustainable agriculture which is environmentally friendly.

I inspected the proposed Mangoola extension with two staff members on 26 July. My observations at that time, as well as study of the EIS documents confirm the opinions which are set out below.

Environmental Considerations

The Mangoola operation and the proposed site of the expansion are in my opinion favourably located. The proposed site could be classified as secluded when compared to other coal operations in the Upper Hunter. It is 20+ Km from Muswellbrook, and 10 Km from Denman, the nearest urban areas. The population density in the locality is very low, the landscape is moderately undulating, and the nearby topography has a reasonable cover of lightly timbered forest, interspersed with grazing land. This topography, and the associated offset areas are advantageous when considering noise abatement, acting as a buffer, while also helpful in dust reduction and preservation of current biodiversity.

An area of approximately 1000 Ha. has been set aside, of which 620 Ha. will be disturbed. My reading of the report indicates that most of this land is Classification 5 or 6, with minor areas of classification 3 and 4. The soils are principally low or medium fertility, Land of this classification is very low in productivity and potential, so only suitable for low level extensive livestock grazing. The loss to agriculture is minimal, and the benefit from land rehabilitated after mining can be substantial. I have attached copies of 2 articles from 2017 issues of the 'Singleton Argus' which illustrate how mined land can be successfully restored to an area which is greatly superior to the original native landscape which existed previously.

I have also attached a copy of a recent media report on the renovation work on Pilliga Scrub low fertility soils that has recently been researched by Dr. Robert Banks of Gunnedah. This type of recovery using sub-tropical grasses with accompanying grazing legumes is another option which could be considered. I believe that this alternative would work well on the rehabilitation program being envisaged at Mangoola.

These are examples of the grazing options which can be used for restoration. Another alternative is the return to a native forest or wooded area, similar to the rehabilitation being carried out on the existing areas of the Mangoola operation. I understand that this is the preferred alternative. This rehabilitation has been very successful with the planting and maintenance of native forest, and has been the subject of a documentary which was shown on national TV a year or two ago. A short video of this work can be seen at the link.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nLk2V0X8Xc>

The appendix on ground water impacts is very thorough and it is difficult to draw any precise conclusions. However my general impression is that the extended area to be mined will have minimal impact on the overall groundwater situation in the immediate area of the mine. Mangoola Coal appears to be treating the land wisely and well, and there appears to be no impediment to this operation on environmental considerations.

I note Mangoola Coal was awarded National Mine of the Year Award for 2013.

Economic and sociological issues.

I consider that it is imperative that the Mangoola extension go ahead with only minor if any alterations. This mine has around 400 employees, who mainly reside in the Upper Hunter. To withhold approval and terminate this mine expansion would result in a significant increase in unemployment, or alternatively an exodus of mining families from the district. To approve the extension would give these workers security for the next ten years.

I am told by others that around 50% of the economic activity in the Upper Hunter is due to mining. This is the mines themselves and the various associated service industries. We must also consider the fact that the Idemitsu owned Muswellbrook Coal is due to cease mining in around 2-3 years and will close completely after completion of rehabilitation work in 2024 or 2025. This will directly affect 150 employees.

Also the Liddell power station is due to close in around 2-3 years, with a total of around 350 workers losing their jobs. This will doubtless also impact on economic activity and employment. If the Mangoola extension were not to be approved, this would mean that a total of 900 jobs would disappear in the Upper Hunter in the near future.

The Upper Hunter dairy industry is in a parlous state. A generation ago, there were several hundred small dairy farms and this has now shrunk to around 20 farms. These farms are also under threat, partly due to drought with high feed costs, partly low dairy prices, and partly due to high energy costs. My expectation is that within 2 years, there will be less than ten dairy farms in the Upper Hunter or maybe none at all.

The Mangoola extension if approved is predicted to eventually produce 50 million tonnes of thermal coal over ten years. Valuing this coal at present day prices (\$US75 per tonne FOB); this places an overall value of \$US3.75 billion on the product, which contributes to the nations export income.

Some reports indicate that coal is a 'sunset industry' which is quickly impacting on the nation. However other reports indicate that the Port of Newcastle is exporting record tonnages of Hunter Valley and North West coal which is annually increasing in volume. Despite the naysayers in some quarters, this seems to me to be an indication that many overseas customers need high quality Hunter coal and will continue to do so for many years to come.

The Mangoola coal, as well as the coal from other Hunter mines, is a ready source of finance for the various Governments. The Commonwealth collects various levies and taxes, the State collects royalties, and local government also collects income from mining. Community groups and various organisations also benefit from grants and funding support from mining companies, including Glencore.

Coal mining is still an acceptable and legal enterprise, valuable to the local and the wider Australian economy. Mangoola Coal is a good example of a responsibly functioning mine, mindful of the environment and the community in which it functions.

I urge the Department of Planning NSW to look favourably on the Mangoola extension project .To deny approval would be a retrograde step, adding to the already severe malaise of the Upper Hunter area.

Yours faithfully,



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