



8 July 2013

Mr Sam Haddad
Director General
Department of Planning and Infrastructure
GPO Box 39
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Mr Haddad

**Wambo Coal Mine Project
Additional Longwalls Modification (DA 305-7-2003 MOD 13)**

I refer to the Acting Executive Director's letter dated 1 July 2013 referring the above application to the Planning Assessment Commission for determination under Ministerial delegation.

Mr Joe Woodward PSM and I constituted the Commission for the Project. I chaired the Commission. The Commission carefully considered the application and the Department's Assessment Report and associated documents.

Government agencies provided comments which have been addressed through the assessment resulting in no significant objection to proposed longwalls 9 and 10.

One submission supporting the proposal was received in addition to one public objection. The concerns raised in the objection relate to similar comments initially provided by Government agencies. Treatment of a right of way access road was also raised by the objector to which the proponent has provided a commitment to vary the right of way route (subject to reasonable notice) to ensure there is no risk to public safety.

The Department's Assessment Report identified the following key issues for assessment:

- Subsidence;
- Water Resources including surface and ground waters, hydrological connectivity, groundwater bores and drawdown impacts;
- Agriculture including the Upper Hunter Strategic Regional Land Use Policy;
- Noise including operational noise impacts;
- Air quality and Greenhouse gas;
- Waste Material; and
- Other issues including biodiversity, heritage (Aboriginal and Cultural), rehabilitation, Right of Way access and socio-economic impacts.

The Assessment Report concluded that with the implementation of suitable mitigation measures within existing and proposed management plans that the project can be conducted in an acceptable environmental manner. Although the proposal will result in additional subsidence and changes to water resources, appropriate measures including ongoing monitoring and enhanced management plans, have been recommended to address these issues. A range of other conditions to monitor and manage potential impacts have also been recommended to address residual issues. On balance, the Department considers the social, economic and environmental benefits of the proposal outweigh any residual impacts that may result from the proposal. The project is recommended for approval subject to conditions.

The Commission notes that one of the key elements of Modification 11 was to provide a new dam (Montrose) to store the water from the South Wambo Dam due to undermining. The proposed mining in MOD 13 is directly under the South Wambo Dam with increased predictions of the potential for vertical subsidence to occur. However, the recommended conditions do not include a requirement for South Wambo Dam to be drained prior to undermining commencing.

We agree with the conclusion in the Assessment Report subject to the inclusion on an additional condition to be inserted at Schedule 4, Condition 28C to ensure operational and environmental impacts from the undermining are minimised by the draining of the South Wambo Dam.

We are satisfied that the Department's recommended conditions, with the insertion of Condition 28C Schedule 4, have adequately addressed the identified issues and the recommendation to grant conditional approval is reasonable.

The file and signed instrument of approval are returned.

Yours sincerely



Gabrielle Kibble
Chair
Planning Assessment Commission

cc. Mr Brad Hazzard MP
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