



Hunter Environment Lobby Inc.

PO Box 188
East Maitland NSW 2323

Margaret Kirton
Project Officer
Major Project Assessments
Department of Planning and Environment

Thursday 16 February 2017

Dear Ms Kirton

Objection to Ashton SEOC (MP 08_0182 Mod 1)

Hunter Environment Lobby Inc. (HEL) is a regional community-based environmental organization that has been active for over 20 years on the issues of environmental degradation, species and habitat loss, and climate change.

HEL has been very closely involved in the approvals process for the Ashton South East Open Cut (SEOC) coal mine in the Camberwell area west of Singleton. We lodged an appeal in the NSW Land and Environment Court (LEC) in 2014 that recognized the impacts of the proposed mine on the local environment and people.

Please refer to Attachment A regarding advice from the Environmental Defenders Office sent to the Deputy Secretary of the Department of Planning and Environment on 16 February 2017.

We wish to reinforce, and seek assurance, that this modification will not alter the LEC condition 10A that prevents commencement of mine development prior to the purchase, lease or licence over property 129.

We object to this modification for a number of reasons, as outlined below.

Firstly, the community consultation on these proposed changes to the SEOC conditions of approval has been very poor. The underlying purpose of these modifications has not been clearly communicated to the community. There is a considerable amount of confusion and a high level of concern in regard to the purpose of this proposed modification.

We object to the request to alter the conditions of consent so that Schedule 3 Clause 1 only has effect following the issuing of the notice by the Proponent of commencement of development.

The social impacts of Ashton Mine on the village of Camberwell have been significant and permanent. The current remaining landholders should maintain their right to request acquisition at a time suitable to them.

The ongoing cumulative impacts from large scale mining causes regular air quality alerts to be sent from the Camberwell monitor, more than any other location in the Upper Hunter.

Because of the poor air quality in the village, with many and regular exceedances of the national air quality standards, the remaining private property has little value in the normal real estate market. These mine affected properties should retain acquisition rights.

The Department of Planning and Environment is currently preparing social impact guidelines to assist the decision-making process for large mining operations. The loss of property value is a particularly harsh social impact that cannot be ignored.

The Ashton Mine has been the key contributor to the demise of the social structure of Camberwell. We consider that Yancoal should be required to acquire the remaining private properties, on request, regardless of the status of the SEOC project.

HEL strongly objects to the acquisition rights being postponed.

We also object to the proposed changes to commitments as outlined in Table B. All commitments should be required to be triggered at the commencement of development, not after the commencement of mining operations.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Jan Davis', with a stylized, flowing script.

Jan Davis
President