

Paul Freeman  
Department of Planning  
GPO Box 39  
Sydney NSW 2001

Thursday 21 May 2015

**Submission of Objection  
Moolarben Coal Complex OC4 South-West Modification**

Mudgee District Environment Group (MDEG), based in the Mid-Western Region local government area in NSW, is working for the conservation of our natural heritage and a sustainable future for our children.

MDEG wishes to express major concern in regard to this application to modify the Moolarben Stage 2 approval only four months after it has been granted. The Moolarben Stage 2 Project went through a very rigorous planning process including a Preferred Project modification before final approval.

The proposed changes in the OC4 South-West Modification (the proposal) are a clear indication that the mine planning for the Moolarben Coal Complex has been highly inefficient.

There is no security for the local community when large scale mining operations are continually changing and causing major impacts on health, amenity and property values.

MDEG does not support the conclusion in the Environmental Assessment Report (the report) that:

*'with the continued implementation of management and monitoring measures, potential environmental impacts could be managed within the currently approved environmental performance limits specified in Project Approvals (05\_0117) and (08\_0135).'<sup>1</sup>*

MDEG cannot concur with either the air quality or the noise assessment reports that the proposal will cause no greater impact than the currently approved operations.

---

<sup>1</sup> Moolarben Coal, 2015, *Moolarben Coal Complex OC4 South-West Modification Environment Assessment*, pES4

The assessments for air quality and noise impacts of the proposal were based on very narrow modeling scenarios. Neither modeling exercise appears to take into account the elevation of the proposed south west haul road across the ridgeline.

MDEG was informed at the Moolarben CCC on 6 May 2015 that the gradient would be a 1:8m incline. The report does not discuss the implications of haul trucks ascending and descending this incline. It is not evident that this consideration is included in either the air quality or the noise assessment modeling.

Both assessment reports rely solely on mining activities to cease under management protocols when impacts reach current operating conditions.

The Moolarben Complex Annual Environmental Management Report (AEMR) 2013-2014 reports that 256 complaints were received from the neighbouring community in that year. On 52 occasions mine machinery was shut down or altered in operations to mitigate noise impacts.

The majority of the noise impacts were from mining in Pit 2 and the majority of machinery shut downs were in Pit 2. The two scenarios chosen for the noise modeling to assess the impacts of the proposal do not appear to include mining operations in Pit 2.

The Year 2016 Scenario<sup>2</sup> includes operations of Pit 1 and Pit 4, including the operation of the proposed south west haul road, which is considered to have the greatest potential noise impact. This scenario does not include mining in Pit 2 where most of the current noise impacts are occurring.

The Year 2018 Scenario<sup>3</sup> includes operations in Pit 1 and Pit 4 to the west, closest to neighbours. However, there is no inclusion of mining in Pit 2 in this scenario.

Similarly with the air quality model, there is no consideration of dust impacts from Pit 2. Only one scenario is used in the air quality model, Year 2016.<sup>4</sup> This includes mainly operations associated with Pit 4 and does not appear to include operations in other Pits.

The emphasis on the noise and dust management strategies, ie changing or ceasing operations, to remain within the current conditions of approval does not examine the extent of the loss of production or the impact on the economic modeling for the Moolarben Coal Complex.

The report does not identify the loss of production through the implementation of management protocols eg during 2013 – 2014.

MDEG has a particular concern with the noise assessment report. The report states that: *'The calculation of noise contours involves numerical interpolation of a noise level array with a graphical accuracy of approximately +/- 2 dBA. This means that in some cases the noise contours will differ slightly from the values in Table 22.'*<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> SLR, April 2015, *Moolarben Coal Complex OC4 South-West Modification Noise Assessment*, p27

<sup>3</sup> Ibid p 28

<sup>4</sup> Todoroski Air Sciences, April 2015, *Air Quality Assessment, Moolarben Coal Project, OC4 South-West Modification*, p8

<sup>5</sup> Noise Assessment p 38

The Voluntary Land Acquisition and Mitigation Policy considers an increase of noise between 1dBA and 2dBA to be a marginal increase, between 3dBA and 5dBA to be a moderate increase and above 5dBA to be an appreciable increase in noise levels. This means that a +/- 2dBA accuracy in noise contours can have a significant outcome for landholders with noise impacts that could place them within noise management zones or noise affectation zones.

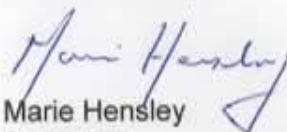
The impact of this modelling on people's lives in the form of health impacts and property values is not taken into account in the report.

The difference between Table 22 and the noise contours provided in App F1 and App F2 is a critical issue for property owners. It is not clearly explained within the report how the noise levels in Table 22 were arrived at for each individual property. It is concerning that neighbouring properties eg properties 75 and 76 have vastly different impacts predicted that cause a difference in the status of the properties within the conditions of approval.

MDEG recommends that further air quality and noise modeling is undertaken before an informed decision can be made on the proposal.

MDEG also recommends that the models include a prediction of lost hours of production for the proposal with the implementation of the Real-time Response Protocols<sup>6</sup> for noise exceedances and Reactive Dust Mitigation Measures<sup>7</sup> for air quality exceedances.

Yours sincerely



Marie Hensley  
Secretary

---

<sup>6</sup> Noise Assessment p 13

<sup>7</sup> Air Quality Assessment p 10