



MID-WESTERN REGIONAL COUNCIL

PO Box 156, MUDGEES NSW 2850

86 Market Street, Mudgee | 109 Herbert Street, Gulgong | 77 Louee Street, Rylstone

T 1300 765 002 or 02 6378 2850 | F 02 6378 2815

E [council@midwestern.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@midwestern.nsw.gov.au)

BC | A0420169

9 March 2016

Matthew Riley  
NSW Department of Planning & Environment  
GPO Box 39  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Mr Riley

#### **WILPINJONG EXTENSION PROJECT – SSD 6764**

I refer to the above-mentioned proposal which is currently on public exhibition. Council previously provided input into the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) on 20 November 2014. Having reviewed the exhibition material, Council does not object to the proposed expansion, however there are some issues that need further consideration and clarification.

Council provides the following comments

#### **TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT**

The report makes little reference to the state of the current road infrastructure in the vicinity of the mining area. A road dilapidation report should be required as a condition of consent to be carried out prior to the commencement of works and again after the extension works are completed. Council also seeks assurances that damage to the road as a result of increased vehicle movements associated with the construction and operation of the mine will be fully funded by the developer and not Council.

Council generally agrees with the Road Transport Assessment (RTA) performed by GTA Consultants (GTA) but contends that there are several items that require addressing. The main access to Wilpinjong Coal Mine (WCM) from the Ulan-Wollar Road is a T-intersection only with no passing lanes provided. In the present context of design standards this would not be permitted in light of current traffic turning movements into the site and the need for passing opportunities. This is particularly relevant considering that the alternative access to the mine will be via the Pit 8 access road that lies further to the east of the main access along the same road. Council proposes that this intersection be upgraded to BAR/BAL as a minimum to facilitate through traffic.

It is further proposed that the remaining 2.87 km unsealed section between the present WCM access and Wollar Village be formed and sealed to a similar standard to that required of the Ulan Road Strategy (2x3.5m wide travel lanes with 1.0m wide sealed shoulders plus 1.0m wide unsealed shoulders). It should be noted that Section 2.6.1 of the project description states that Wilpinjong Coal Pty Limited (WCPL) will fund the sealing of the remaining unsealed section of Ulan-Wollar Road and the provision of a replacement sealed low-level causeway crossing of Cumbo Creek. This treatment is proposed to accommodate traffic either entering/exiting the mine at the Pit 8 access road from the Ulan direction or similarly traffic arriving/leaving in the south easterly direction. Table 6.1 of the RTA (GTA) indicates that traffic exiting the mine to the east generally increases, which supports the proposed treatment by Council. The upgrade should include any necessary formation widening and the inclusion of all road furniture. The intersection of the proposed Pit 8 access road should similarly be a BAR/BAL treatment as recommended in the study.

A further consideration is that the RTA (GTA) relies on a Traffic Impact Assessment performed by Parsons Brinckerhoff (2015) in relation to the proposed Bylong Coal Project. The cumulative traffic impact resulting from the Bylong Coal Project may be underestimated as the traffic assessment provided in the Bylong Coal traffic study did not include the scenario of no temporary workers accommodation (TWA) unit being built at Bylong. Council is strongly opposed to a TWA associated with the Bylong Coal Project and has argued that this scenario should have been factored into their traffic study. The reliance on outcomes of the former study may have implications for recommendations suggested in this study.

## **NOISE**

The Noise and Blasting Assessment prepared by SLT Consulting Australia Pty Ltd refers to the potential for noise to exceed the intrusiveness criteria, prescribed by the NSW Industrial Noise Policy, during adverse weather events from the year 2024 in relation to the operation of Pit 8. The report puts forward the following mitigation options:

- Attenuating noise emissions from all CAT 789 trucks at the mine, plus shutting down one Pit 8 mining fleet and the satellite ROM pad front end loader (FEL); or
- Shutting down both mining fleets in Pit 8 and also the Pit 8 satellite ROM pad FEL; or
- Attenuating noise emissions from all major mobile plant at the mine site, supplemented with additional mobile plant shutdowns as required under adverse conditions.

The report mentions that these measures, while technically feasible, would require significant capital costs and therefore other measures should be considered to reduce noise impact that incur less capital costs. There have been some previous complaints from residents in the area about the noise from Wilpinjong Coal's current operations, the non-compliance with the NSW Industrial Noise Policy is considered to be inappropriate given the report identifies feasible options that can be undertaken to achieve compliance.

Council previously requested that independent modelling of noise impacts be undertaken to ensure that the mine has minimal impact on sensitive receptors including the village of Wollar. This appeared to have been put forward as an option by the Department of Planning & Environment (DP&E) at the community meeting in Wollar on 23 February 2016. Council encourages the Department to follow through on this and include the independent modelling requirement in the draft conditions of consent.

## **FLORA AND FAUNA**

The Matters of National Environmental Significance assessment in Appendix E Attachment B is considered unsatisfactory in regards to the 'insignificant impact' assessment on:

- Box-Gum EEC;
- *Ozothamnus tessellatus*;
- Regent Honeyeater; and
- Koala populations.

However, it is noted that this is a separate approval process under Federal Legislation. The report indicates that the project was considered a controlled action by the Federal Department of Environment but did not state if approval has been granted and if so what, if any, constraints/measures the Minister has placed on the project.

## **HERITAGE**

Although this is the domain of the NSW Office of Environment & Heritage to assess, there is concern within the local Aboriginal Community in relation to the destruction of rock formations, art and ochre quarry on the Slate Gully rocky hill. These sites have been assessed as being of regional significance within the report. Further consultation with the local Aboriginal community is recommended to identify potential mitigation measures where appropriate.

## **GROUND AND SURFACE WATER**

Council has no specific objections regarding ground and surface water, subject to strict compliance with the NSW Department of Primary Industries – Water (DPI Water) requirements.

## **AIR QUALITY**

The report indicates that the project will lead to increased dust levels compared to the current operations, but it will remain within the acceptable criteria. However, there is potential during the operation of Pit 8 that air quality standards could be exceeded during adverse weather events. The report recommends the implementation of the mine's existing reactive dust management strategy which may involve the shutting down of equipment in Pit 8 during adverse weather conditions.

Council recommends that as per the comments regarding noise, independent modelling be carried out to ensure that compliance with the relevant standards are achieved at all times.

## **SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION**

Council originally raised concerns regarding this issue based on previous spontaneous combustion events and the impact this had on air quality. WCPL implemented a Spontaneous Combustion Management Plan in 2015 which focuses on the following measures for preventing outbreaks:

- Mine planning, including capping of carbonaceous material, placing high-risk materials as low as practicable in mine voids, sealing exposed seams in non-active highwall faces, stockpile management;
- Risk identification and assessment involving identifying and monitoring coal stockpiles for signs of heating and prioritising them for washing in the CHPP;
- Use of thermal imaging technology and visual inspections to identify and monitor hot spots within the mine.

Continued use of these measures is considered to satisfy the concerns that Council initially raised in response to the draft Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements.

## **CUMULATIVE IMPACTS**

The numerous modifications over the last decade has had a significant impact on the village of Wollar and a substantial reduction in the number of residents. Cumulative impact assessments have been carried out for noise and air quality and appear to achieve the required standards. However, due to the issues raised from residents in the area it is requested once more that independent modelling be carried out to ensure the proposed extension does not adversely impact upon the amenity levels for existing sensitive receivers.

## **SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT**

The economic assessment conducted by Deloitte Access Economics recognises that whilst the project would have positive economic benefits in terms of increased business sales and employment opportunities, cessation of mining operations would result in a contraction in broader regional economic activity. The volatility of mining projects has significant economic and social impacts which is an ongoing concern for Council. It is important that WCPL continues to share relevant information with Council on a timely basis, so that these impacts can be managed.

The report states that WCPL will develop a Mine Closure Plan for the Project which would include details of the mine closure strategy in consultation with Council, DP&E and the community. Council supports the development of this plan and requests that this is completed at least 3 years before the workforce numbers are expected to significantly decline to assist in minimising the adverse socio-economic effects.

A key social impact for Council and the community is the potential of the project to accelerate the existing decline of the Wollar village and reduce the community's ability to sustain social resources and current services. With a declining population in the Wollar area it becomes increasingly difficult to attract volunteers to assist in maintaining community facilities (such as local parks and the Community Hall) and support services (such as the Rural Fire Service). It is important that WCPL works with community stakeholders to help address these impacts. Negotiations between Council and WCPL have resulted in WCPL verbally agreeing to maintain some community facilities such as toilet blocks and mowing of local parks and town entrances.

## **COMMUNITY FEEDBACK**

Council has received community feedback in regards to the project. The key issues raised are: the condition of roads in the Wollar area; maintenance and running costs of community infrastructure in the Wollar village; and ongoing health and social impacts.

Should you have any queries in relation to this matter please contact Brad Cam on (02) 6378 2850.

Yours Faithfully



**BRAD CAM**  
**GENERAL MANAGER**