



PO Box 552, Katoomba NSW 2780
Phone: 0419 307 099
gbm.worldheritage@environment.nsw.gov.au

Our reference DOC14/125616
Our contact Jacqueline Reid ph: 0419 307 099

Mining and Industry Projects
NSW Department of Planning & Environment
GPO Box 39
Sydney NSW 2014
via email to: thomas.watt@planning.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Watt,

Re: Airly Colliery Development Application 162/91 Modification 3

The Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (GBMWhA) Advisory Committee was jointly appointed by the Commonwealth and State Environment Ministers to advise on matters relating to the protection, conservation, presentation and management of the GBMWhA, which was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2000 for its outstanding natural values.

The Advisory Committee has always taken a strong position that it is essential to consider any adverse direct and indirect impacts on World Heritage and other values from developments that occur adjacent to the GBMWhA. The Advisory Committee has also expressed its support for the reservation of the Gardens of Stone Stage 2 proposal and congratulated Centennial Coal for its support of the creation of the Muggii Murum-ban State Conservation Area (SCA) over the Mt Airly/Genowlan complex.

Objection

The Advisory Committee strongly opposes this proposal as it will significantly damage Muggii Murum-ban SCA, an area the Advisory Committee has recommended be included in the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area once mining has concluded.

Background

The right to mine coal at Airly Genowlan was originally granted in 1991 under DA 162/91 with Centennial becoming involved in 1997. In 2009-10, mining commenced under a range of very strict conditions designed to ensure the integrity of internationally significant pagodas and their associated cliff-lines, and also protect the heritage of the Oil Shale Ruins (currently recognised by the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage). The negotiated conditions, in acknowledgement of the proposed Muggii Murum-ban State Conservation Area (SCA) involved low-impact extraction such that half the coal resource would be left in the ground to protect the biodiversity and geodiversity of Genowlan and Airly mesas.

In January 2013, the mine was placed on care and maintenance until Centennial announced that it would seek approval to renew Airly Mine's existing planning consent. Modification 3 is the first component of this 'new' proposal. It aims to extend the original 1991 development consent to October 2015, whilst a substantial mine-extension proposal (SSD 12_5581) is prepared.

Concerns with Modification 3

If approved, the modification would continue high- impact operations stemming from a time (1991) when environmental outcomes received relatively little attention. By continuing the original consent in a modified form, Centennial would no longer be complying with the commitments made in relation to preserving the attributes of the Mugii Murum-ban SCA.

The Advisory Committee believes that the 1991 development consent for this mine should be revoked and a new development application should be provided for the whole mining operation.

Pagodas, cliff-lines, surface water, groundwater, biodiversity, and oil-shale heritage must be protected from major levels of subsidence. Allowing mining under the old regulatory framework would permit up to 1.8 m of subsidence. This is inconsistent with the objectives of an SCA and should be opposed by the Department of Planning & Environment. The committee strongly believes that Centennial must be held to the commitments made in relation to limiting mine subsidence to 125 mm or less.

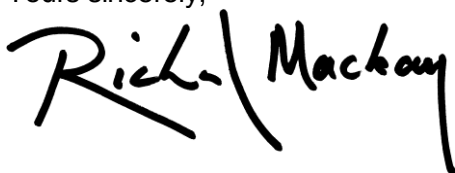
The Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area must be protected from impacts related to water discharges. If Modification 3 is approved, the mine will discharge saline mine-make into Airly Creek and thence into the Gardens of Stone National Park within the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. It should be a condition of approval that mine effluent and 'recovered leakage' be treated to a level where its chemistry is consistent with that of the receiving watercourse.

Conclusion

The Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Advisory Committee opposes the Airly Colliery Development Application in its current form due to impacts on the Mugii Murum-ban SCA and adjoining GBMWhA.

If you would like more information about the GBMWhA Advisory Committee, please contact the Executive Officer, Jacqueline Reid by telephone to 0419 307 099 or via email to jacqueline.reid@environment.nsw.gov.au

Yours sincerely,



Prof Richard Mackay, AM
Chair
Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area Advisory Committee

10/07/2014