



Ref: dcs.s16/06

5 September 2016

Department of Planning and Environment
Attention: Director – Resource Assessments
GPO Box 39
SYDNEY NSW 200

Dear Director

WALLARAH 2 COAL PROJECT – AMENDMENTS

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission regarding the proposed amendments to the Wallarah 2 Coal project.

I have expressed my strong opposition to this project in previous submissions to you, and my position hasn't changed. In fact I believe the amendments signalled by the proponent create potentially greater impacts on residents living within my State electorate of Lake Macquarie, specifically those living in the Wyee area.

I first acknowledge that the amended proposal involves:

- removal of the previously proposed rail loop;
- relocation of the secondary rail track and train loading facility to the eastern side of the main rail line;
- a conveyor system to deliver coal from a stockpile at the proposed Tooheys Road surface facilities site to the new train loading facility location;
- and
- realignment of the sewer connection.

I also acknowledge these changes were submitted after the 2014 Land and Environment Court decision which required the consent of landowners to build the rail loop.

As indicated earlier, I have concerns about the proposed amendments which I believe will continue to pose a risk to residents and property owners in the Wyee area. I will detail those concerns later but wish to provide some background.

In June 2013 I made a submission to the Director, Mining Projects, at the Department of Planning and Infrastructure regarding the proposed Wallarah 2 Coal Project. In my submission I made the point that the application currently under consideration is ostensibly the same as the proposal refused by the former State government; a proposal resoundingly rejected by the then Opposition leader, Barry O'Farrell. While his stance is not a consideration for the merit assessment by the Planning Assessment Commission, it is noteworthy in that it has added to an undermining of public confidence in the management of this proposal and the associated assessment process.

Following the previous refusal of the Wallarah 2 proposal and after the election of a new government and Mr O'Farrell as Premier, representatives of Kores, the proponent company, advised me they would be revisiting and resubmitting an application for the mine. I asked what changes they had made to address the large number of concerns that led to the original refusal and which would therefore, warrant a renewed application. They indicated there were effectively no changes.

The community has largely maintained its opposition to the proposal. Major concerns still exist around water security stemming from risk to the aquifer that could see loss of potable water, water for agriculture and for environmental purposes. While volumes of information have been made available, the conclusions of experts varies considerably. I do not profess to be able to conclude what level of risk exists, however I prefer to support a position that errs by being too cautious with such a resource than one that sees water as a worthy considered risk.

In recent months I have been contacted by some Wyee residents who have expressed concern about the latest proposed amendments. Those concerns relate to dust, noise and other impacts, and the absence in the Environmental Impact Study of any reference to their nearby properties.

In fact, properties on Bushells Ridge Road and Hue Hue Road at Wyee appear to have been ignored in the EIS.

I maintain concern for properties that will be affected by associated impacts from surface operations, including noise and air quality reduction. Despite assurances from the proponents in relation to the management of dust from the proposed mine, the reality is there would be few, if any, coal mines close to a population centre where fugitive dust is not a problem, either year round or seasonally. The growing awareness of the impacts of dust particles of PM10 and PM2.5 has understandably brought much greater scrutiny of mining activity and its impact on the health of communities. The Wallarah 2 mine would be very close to many thousands of people and add to air quality concerns within the region.

Impacts on residential areas outside of the Wyong LGA, such as those at Wyee, appear to be understated or ignored. Properties within Wyee are in close proximity to surface operations and could be expected to be impacted by noise and dust from time to time, and indeed changes proposed to the rail loop operations. Residents in this location would incur health risks of dust from inhalation, or from rainwater captured from household roofs.

That is certainly the concern of many Wyee residents. Many homes in this area rely on tank water as the main supply of drinking water and other domestic uses.

As I have previously indicated, this area is undergoing growth and is a significant part of the strategic growth plans of Lake Macquarie City Council. Growth here has also been supported by Planning NSW within the Lower Hunter Regional Strategy and subsequent variants.

Residents of Wyee are, I believe, rightly concerned at the lack of attention given to their circumstances and the potential impact on them from a mine approval and, more specifically, these proposed amendments.

I have previously placed on record that I am not opposed to the mining industry. I do, however, believe there should be greater balance between the needs of residential populations for water, arable land and clean air and the economic argument for coal extraction when there remains a significant supply of coal in areas much further removed from residential populations and environmental risk. For that reason, I do not support the Wallarah 2 Coal Project in its current form, nor the proposed amendments now being considered

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Piper', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Greg Piper, MP

Member for Lake Macquarie