

Professor Mary O'Kane AC  
Chair - Independent Planning Commission  
Via email: [mary.okane@ipcn.nsw.gov.au](mailto:mary.okane@ipcn.nsw.gov.au)

19 January 2022

Dear Professor O'Kane

**Narrabri Underground Mine  
Stage 3 Extension Project (SSD 10269)**

The Department has completed its assessment of the merits of the Narrabri Underground Mine Stage 3 Extension Project (SSD 10269).

The application is referred to the Independent Planning Commission (the Commission) for determination as the Minister has requested the Commission to hold a public hearing into the carrying out of the project and to determine the development application. The Commission is therefore the delegated consent authority.

The project involves continuation of longwall mining with the Stage 2 mining area of the existing Narrabri Mine, an extension of longwall mining to the south of the mine to extract an additional 82 million tonnes of Run-of-Mine coal, and ancillary surface infrastructure to support mining. Mining is proposed until 2044.

The Department publicly exhibited the application from 5 November 2020 to 16 December 2020 (42 days) and received 61 individual community and 6 submissions from special interest groups. Apart from four special interest groups, all submissions supported the project because of its positive socio-economic benefits, especially the ongoing employment opportunities for the existing mine workforce.

Three special interest groups objected to the project, mainly on the grounds of potential surface and groundwater impacts, biodiversity impacts and greenhouse gas emissions. The Department also received a small number of additional representations after the exhibition, mostly from landholders near the project who were mainly concerned about groundwater impacts.

In May 2021 the Applicant, Narrabri Coal Operations Pty Ltd (NCOPL), lodged a project Amendment Report. The amendment removed 31 hectares from the surface development footprint, relocated some surface components to reduce impacts on a threatened plant species, and incorporated flaring of pre-mining drained gas to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The Department's detailed assessment of the project has been informed by expert advice from Government agencies, the Independent Advisory Panel for Underground Mining and the Commonwealth Independent Expert Scientific Committee.

Based on this assessment, the Department considers that NCOPL has designed the project in a manner that achieves a good balance between maximising the recovery of a coal resource of State significance and minimising the potential environmental impacts.

Overall, the Department considers that the major economic and social benefits for the local area and to NSW outweigh the potential impacts, and that the project is approvable subject to the recommended conditions.

I have attached a copy of the Department's assessment report and recommended conditions of consent for the Commission's consideration. The project has also been referred to the Commission through the major projects portal. A copy of the Minister's request for a public hearing is also attached.

If you have any questions or wish to arrange a briefing, please contact me on 0477 345 626 or by email at [stephen.odonoghue@planning.nsw.gov.au](mailto:stephen.odonoghue@planning.nsw.gov.au)

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'SO', written in a cursive style.

Steve O'Donoghue  
**A/Executive Director**  
**Energy, Resources and Industry Assessments**