



Mr Ron Bush  
Tahmoor Coal Pty Ltd  
PO Box 100  
TAHMOOR NSW 2573

  
Dear Mr Bush

**Tahmoor South Coal Project (SSD 8445)  
Request for Response to Submissions**

The public exhibition of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Tahmoor South Coal Project concluded on 5 March 2019.

In response to the exhibition, the Department received 78 submissions from community members, 8 submissions from special interest groups and 12 submissions from Government agencies. The Department notes that 11 submissions were in the form of objections. The submissions can be viewed on the Department's website <https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/search-name?name=tahmoor>.

The Department also received advice from the Independent Expert Scientific Committee and its own independent groundwater expert, Hugh Middlemis of HydroGeoLogic.

In addition to the matters raised in the submissions outlined above, the Department has identified areas requiring additional information, further consideration and/or clarification. These are outlined in **Attachment A**.

Now that it has been confirmed that Tahmoor Coal will revise key aspects of the project and that consequently the Independent Planning Commission has deferred its initial review of the project, it is requested that you respond to all submissions and the matters outlined in **Attachment A**. It is suggested that your response to submissions is coupled together with the revisions to the project and any necessary changes to the impact assessment.

The Department has also finalised its preliminary issues report which further expands on the issues raised in **Attachment A**. This report is available on the Department's website. It is requested that your response to submissions is combined with a response to the Department's preliminary issues report.

If you wish to discuss this matter further, please contact Jessie Evans at the details above.

Yours sincerely,



Howard Reed  
Director  
Resource Assessments

9.7.19

## Attachment A

### **Subsidence**

- Subsidence Advisory NSW (SA NSW) raised concerns that the predicted subsidence impacts to Bargo are significant. Several agencies, including SA NSW, recommended revising the longwall layout to reduce predicted subsidence impacts to natural and built features. The Department considers that the proposed undermining of Bargo is a critical issue requiring careful consideration. As such, the Department requests that further consideration is given to reducing impacts to Bargo.
- Wollondilly Council raised several concerns about subsidence impacts predicted for its Bargo Waste Management Centre. The Department is also concerned that an assessment of the potential subsidence impacts to this facility was not provided. Please provide a detailed assessment focused on predicted subsidence impacts to the Bargo Waste Management Centre. This should include, but not be limited to, an assessment of slope stability, surface cracking, leakage (either water or gas) to surface water or groundwater and any potential mitigation measures.
- There are inconsistencies between the subsidence predictions reported in the Subsidence Assessment (Appendix F) and other technical assessments. The Department requests that you review and confirm the correct subsidence predictions and identify any necessary changes to the technical assessments.

### **Social**

- The Department requests that the social impact assessment (SIA) be updated to consider the psychological and other indirect impacts of subsidence, including stress, anxiety, uncertainty, disturbance and hardship. The SIA should consider the timeframes and impacts from when a property owner begins to experience subsidence impacts to when those subsidence impacts conclude, the assessment of those impacts, the subsequent claims process and any possible appeals.
- The Department also requests that the SIA further considers social impacts on the Aboriginal community, groundwater bore users and those with ties to surrounding natural features (especially Thirlmere Lakes). The focus should be on impacts *as they are likely to be experienced by the community*.

### **Noise**

- The Department requests that Tahmoor Coal provide a revised noise and vibration assessment (NIA), prepared in accordance with the *Noise Policy for Industry* (NPfI), that addresses the concerns raised in EPA's submission.
- The revised NIA should comprehensively address the historic low-frequency noise issues at Tahmoor Mine. Priority should be placed on mitigating low-frequency noise emissions from the Coal Handling and Preparation Plant (CHPP), rather than only focusing on the overall (A-weighted) noise reductions. The NIA must clearly set out the assessment methods, modelling inputs, applied mitigation measures, and predicted outcomes. Alternative options to reduce low frequency noise which have been explored by Tahmoor Coal should be presented and justified as to why they are not being implemented (eg relocation of CHPP).
- The revised NIA needs to provide a detailed noise assessment for the proposed activities over the entire duration of the project. All noise modelling inputs and assumptions should be set out, including details on how the noise model has been validated, to enable the Department and EPA to determine the full extent of potential noise impacts and the effectiveness of the proposed mitigation measures.
- The NIA does not provide a clear description of existing mine activities and noise levels. Without this information, it is not possible to ascertain the likely change in noise arising from the proposed operation. The NIA must present existing mine noise levels with sufficient evidence and justification, taking into account noise monitoring undertaken at the site over many years by different consultants.

### **Air Quality**

- NSW Health considered that potential health impacts on residents located close to the proposed ventilation shafts were not clearly addressed. The Department requests that Tahmoor Coal provides additional information to address any potential health impacts that may result from the Project.

## **Water Resources**

- Several agencies, including the Department, are concerned that the groundwater model does not simulate surface cracking. The Department requests that the groundwater model is revised and re-run to simulate this process and the other requests set out by DoI Water, IESC and the Department's groundwater expert. Should any of the issues raised not be considered to require input into the model, a detailed justification should be provided.
- Further information should be provided regarding the predicted height of fracturing. This is a contentious topic for the Southern Coalfield and should be appropriately discussed, outlined and assessed.
- The Department considers that the predicted impacts to privately-owned groundwater bores to be a significant consideration for the Project and as such requests that any re-runs of the model consider impacts to groundwater bores and provide as much information as possible.
- During assessment of the Metropolitan Coal Mine and Bulli Seam Operations project applications there was a recognition that 3<sup>rd</sup> order streams were important. The Project would impact on 3<sup>rd</sup> order streams. The Department requests that additional consideration is given to justify the proposed impacts on these streams, and that any proposed remediation is appropriately detailed with success measures outlined.
- Provide an update on acquiring the required additional water access licences.
- Several agencies (EPA, OEH, IESC and Wollondilly Shire Council) raised concerns over the proposed mine waste water discharges. The Department requests that Tahmoor Coal provides further assessment of the levels of salinity, metals or other pollutants in anticipated discharges and the potential impacts on downstream receiving waters.
- OEH and the IESC provided recommendations to improve the flood study. The Department requests that an updated flood study is provided that addresses these recommendations.

## **Biodiversity**

- The Department's principal concern regarding biodiversity is the direct clearing of a critically endangered ecological community and threatened species. The Department requests that Tahmoor Coal provides further information and evidence to demonstrate that the local populations of these communities and species would not be put at risk of extinction or significantly reduced viability.
- OEH was not satisfied that Tahmoor Coal had clearly demonstrated that the 'avoid' principle had been adequately applied and recommended that Tahmoor Coal further evaluate options for the expansion of the rejects emplacement area, including alternative locations and underground or offsite disposal. The Department requests that these options are further evaluated and assessed in the RTS.
- OEH also raised concerns regarding the proposed offset strategy. The Department notes that there is a significant shortfall in physical credits available for certain communities and species. Please provide an update as to Tahmoor Coal's intention to find more credits on the market or to pay into the Biodiversity Conservation Fund. The RTS should also include detailed justification as to why some species are excluded from the proposed offset strategy, as identified by OEH.
- The IESC raised a number of concerns about potential impacts on groundwater dependent ecosystems. Please address these concerns and provide additional information as required.

## **Rehabilitation**

- Wollondilly Council has concerns about repair and rehabilitation of subsidence impacts on watercourses. The Department requests that Tahmoor Coal provides additional discussion and evidence for self-remediation and the potential success of active remediation of surface cracking, including in watercourses.
- The Resources Regulator advised the Department its advice attached to the SEARs had not been fully addressed and requested additional information regarding the proposed final landform, rehabilitation of watercourses and rehabilitation completion and performance criteria. The Department requests that Tahmoor Coal provides an updated rehabilitation assessment to address this advice.

## **Economics**

- Please provide a detailed justification outlining why 'average' NSW wage earners would comprise the bulk of employees. Please also address the following comments:
  - clarify whether the average NSW wage applied includes allowances and/or bonuses;
  - clarify whether the average NSW wage is adjusted for real wage growth or consumer price inflation;
  - explain why it is realistic to assume that 100% of workers would come from NSW; and
  - explain further the assumption that disutility for workers is zero.
- Please provide charts and tables that include the different discount rates used in the sensitivity analysis.

- The Local Effects Analysis is very brief. Please provide further explanation of:
  - potential second round employment and output effects from the Project; and
  - include a qualitative discussion of the local environmental, social and transport impacts of the Project.

#### **Voluntary Planning Agreement**

- Please provide an update on the status of the proposed Voluntary Planning Agreement with Wollondilly Shire Council.

#### **Traffic**

- Please clarify the mine design used as the basis of the Traffic Impact Assessment and address the concerns raised by Wollondilly Shire Council.