

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

17 December 2020

Dear Professor O'Kane

Tahmoor South Coal Project (SSD 8445)

The Department has completed its assessment of the merits of the Tahmoor South Coal Project (SSD 8445).

The application is referred to the Independent Planning Commission (the Commission) for determination as the Minister has requested the Commission hold a public hearing into the carrying out of the project and determine the development application. The Commission is therefore the delegated consent authority under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

The project involves new longwall mining domains to the south of the existing Tahmoor Mine to extract an additional 33 million tonnes of run of mine coal over a 10-year period. The existing mining pit top area would continue to be used with upgrades to existing facilities. The new mining area is located within the Bargo Mine Subsidence District which was declared in 1975.

The Department publicly exhibited the application from 23 January to 5 March 2019 (42 days) and received 83 submissions from the community and special interest groups. Most of these (87%) supported the project because of the ongoing and additional employment and business opportunities.

Following the exhibition period, the Department received an additional 134 representations on the project, mostly from members of the general public. The majority of the representations (84%) objected to the project.

The main issues raised in submissions relate to the potential subsidence impacts of the project on built and natural features in and around Bargo, along with concerns about impacts on water resources, biodiversity and greenhouse gas emissions.

In February 2020, the Applicant, Tahmoor Coal Pty Ltd (Tahmoor Coal) amended the mine plan to reduce subsidence impacts, with the removal of one longwall panel, and the footprint of the reject emplacement area to minimise biodiversity and noise impacts.

In August 2020, Tahmoor Coal lodged a second amendment to the project removing a further two longwall panels from the mine plan to significantly reduce the extent and scale of subsidence impacts on built features (particularly within the township of Bargo).

While the amendments to the project have resulted in the significant reduction of potential impacts to both built and natural features, the Department has also recommended another longwall be shortened to reduce impacts on Aboriginal cultural heritage sites and a local creek.

The Department's detailed assessment of the project has been informed by expert advice from Government agencies, independent experts and the Commonwealth Independent Expert Scientific Committee.

Based on this assessment, the Department considers that with these changes to the mine plan, the project now achieves a reasonable balance between maximising the recovery of a coal resource of State significance and minimising the potential environmental and amenity impacts.

The Department has recommended conditions to ensure that the project complies with contemporary criteria and standards, that the impacts are consistent with those predicted, and that residual impacts are effectively minimised, managed and compensated for.

On balance, the Department considers that the significant economic and social benefits of the project outweigh its 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.

If you have any questions or wish to arrange a briefing, please contact Mike Young on 8217 2091 or by email at mike.young@planning.nsw.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



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Marcus Ray
Group Deputy Secretary
Planning and Assessment