



PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

MEMBER FOR LAKE MACQUARIE

Electorate Office
35 The Boulevard
Toronto 2283

Tel: (02) 4959 3200
Fax: (02) 4950 4076



Ref: dcs/s

63

16 August 2007

Mr Peter Downes
Manager Rural Development Western NSW
Department of Planning
GPO Box 39
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Mr Downes

Submission to the Strategic Inquiry into Potential Coal Mining Impacts in the Wyong LGA

I attach my submission to the above proposal and would appreciate the opportunity to make an oral presentation to the Inquiry on Tuesday 28 August 2007.

Yours faithfully

Greg Piper MP
MEMBER FOR LAKE MACQUARIE

enc

Submission

to the

Strategic Inquiry into Potential Coal Mining Impacts in the Wyong LGA



From: Greg Piper, MP
Member for Lake Macquarie
35 The Boulevard
TORONTO NSW 2283
16 August 2007

On 7 June 2007 I made a Private Member's Statement in the Legislative Assembly in which I raised my concerns regarding the proposed Kores Wallarah 2 Coal Project. A copy of that speech was submitted to the Independent Panel on 24 July 2007 and I believe that much of the content of that speech is directly applicable to this Inquiry.

In this submission I have grouped my comments under the headings provided by the Minister in this Inquiry's terms of reference.

1. Whether coal mining under the catchment for the Mardi Dam would compromise, in any significant way, the water supply of the Central Coast;

The Kores project site occupies a significant portion of a catchment that collects 68 per cent of the water in Wyong and Gosford Local Government Areas (LGAs). Credible information in the public domain highlights the risk to the environment and subsequent risk to underground and surface water flows. There is no certainty that the proposed mine would not deliver disastrous results as have been experienced with other longwall mining operations. Even minimal cracking of the Dooralong and Yarramalong valley floors could result in much of the area's surface water supply being lost.

I acknowledge that potable water for the Central Coast can be and is to some extent now sourced from the Hunter Valley through arrangements with the Hunter Water Corporation. While we may have the technical and engineering ability to source water in this way I would question whether this is a reasonable excuse to compromise the ability to harvest water for domestic purposes from a local water catchment. I further note that the newly completed water pipeline between the Central Coast and the Hunter was constructed on the basis that water flows could at times be reversed so as to supply surplus to the Hunter. This ability could be lost if the Mardi Dam catchment was further compromised.

The risk itself, even without a quantified loss of water, could substantially compromise the water supply of the Central Coast.

2. Environmental impacts on any underground coal mining, with a particular emphasis on:

- **surface and groundwater resources, especially on drinking water supply and flooding;**
- **hazards and risks of subsidence impacts; and**
- **the amenity of community, including dust and noise impacts;**

There are many precedents demonstrating the loss of surface water to longwall mine workings. A mining engineer has provided the Australian Coal Alliance with advice leading to its statement that this mine would impact on the integrity of the water catchment. The Yarramalong and Dooralong Valleys, through a combination of surface water and seepage, provide the majority of Wyong and Gosford's water. Any level of subsidence, regardless of how slight, creates the risk of losing much of the region's water supply.

Similarly, any changes to ground or surface water would adversely impact on biodiversity. The ecology of these valleys floors has developed to suit a particular climatic and hydrological regime. Subsidence would very likely lead to changed conditions and loss of existing vegetation and habitat. It is likely that the comparatively rapid change caused by subsidence would result in a reduced capacity for re-establishment of healthy native communities.

It is essential that where the proposal may impact on documented or predicted presence of threatened species or biological communities, or where the proposed project may trigger a key threatening process, that the Federal Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act be invoked.

Air-borne coal dust, whether from open cut mining or surface facilities, is a known health risk. In the case of the Kores proposal the PMIO zone, the identified dust risk area for respiratory ailments and cancer, would cover much of the residential development within the local government areas of Wyong and Lake Macquarie. The coal loader proposed for Tooheys Road is 2.4 kilometres from Warnervale, the Central Coast's largest proposed growth centre and also in close proximity to significant existing residential populations in the Wyee area of the Lake Macquarie LGA. The population of this area is anticipated to grow substantially in accord with the State Government's Lower Hunter Regional Strategy.

The impacts of dust also extend to water quality in rainwater tanks, aesthetics of the surrounding areas and therefore ultimately on property values. The potential for dust impacts in residential and employment areas must form a constraint on approvals for mining, as must consideration of dust impacts upon educational institutions, child-care facilities and nursing homes/aged care facilities.

Noise emanating from coal loading, heavy vehicle movements and rail transport is also highly likely to impact on existing and future development areas.

3. Social and economic significance of any underground coal mining to the local community, the region and State;

There is a risk of severe social and economic impacts from the Kores proposal. The threat to water supplies, air quality, health and property values on the Central Coast is an unacceptable risk compared to the financial return the project would bring to the state.

Employment provided by the Kores proposal is for a limited time and this transient benefit should be weighed against the risk of permanent losses to the local environment and water supply. There could ultimately be a greater and longer-term benefit to the region if the same number of jobs was provided by alternative industries producing renewable energy.

4. Areas where mining should not be permitted, or if permitted the conditions under which it may proceed having regard to the matters listed above and the NSW Government's strategic planning policies that apply to the area.

The Kores proposal appears inconsistent with the Draft Central Coast Regional Strategy's plans for Warnervale to be further developed as a new town centre.

There would be considerable impacts across a number of LGAs if growth was redistributed or delayed to accommodate this mine.

I make this submission as the elected representative of many who would be affected by the Kores Wallarah 2 Coal Project. In so doing, I acknowledge the information contributed by a variety of stakeholders including the Australian Coal Alliance, the business community and residents. I trust that the Inquiry will place due emphasis on the information provided by the public and reach a conclusion that will also provide for the considered application of new information as it becomes available.

The terms of reference are not specific to the Kores proposal, yet much of the currently available information is. Given the breadth of this enquiry, I believe that any recommendations arising should propose stringent limitations broadly applicable to the region as well as specific advice relating to the Kores proposal.

In his media release of 5 February 2007, the Minister referred to the State Environmental Planning Policy preventing open cut mining in the Lake Macquarie LGA. This is part of the context in which he has directed this Inquiry to identify areas where mining should not be permitted, or to set conditions. I believe that the risks of the Kores proposal far outweigh the merits and that this Inquiry should make specific recommendations against it.

I submit that the Inquiry should specifically preclude mining in the catchments of all creeks contributing to the Central Coast's water supply and that no dust risk zones should overlap current or proposed development areas. Comments relating specifically to the site of the proposed Wallarah 2 Coal Project should be applied to other sites where the same potential impacts exist.