

# Inquiry into NSW Southern Coalfield - Independent Expert Panel

The NSW Government has established an independent inquiry into underground coal mining in the Southern Coalfield<sup>1</sup>. An Independent Expert Panel has been appointed to conduct the inquiry.

## **Terms of reference**

The terms of reference for the inquiry are to:

1. Undertake a strategic review of the impacts of underground mining in the Southern Coalfield<sup>1</sup> on significant natural features (ie rivers and significant streams, swamps and cliff lines), with particular emphasis on risks to water flows, water quality and aquatic ecosystems; and
2. Provide advice on best practice in regard to:
  - a) assessment of subsidence impacts;
  - b) avoiding and/or minimising adverse impacts on significant natural features; and
  - c) management, monitoring and remediation of subsidence and subsidence-related impacts; and
3. Report on the social and economic significance to the region and the State of the coal resources in the Southern Coalfield.

The panel is to consider and advise on issues raised in written submissions and during the panel hearings that are relevant to the terms of reference.

<sup>1</sup> The Southern Coalfield is the group of underground coal mines south and southwest of Sydney, principally located in the Illawarra Region, but extending southwest to Bargo and Berrima.

## **Panel members**

The panel members are: Prof Bruce Hebblewhite (Chair, Subsidence Expert), Emer Prof Jim Galvin (Subsidence Expert); Mr Col Mackie (Groundwater Expert); Assoc Prof Ron West (Aquatic Ecologist) and Mr Drew Collins (Economist).

## **Call for submissions**

You are invited to make a written submission to the panel addressing matters which fall within the terms of reference. Your submission, including contact details (name, address, telephone and/or email), should be sent to the Southern Coalfield Panel Secretariat, c/- Department of Planning, GPO Box 39, Sydney NSW 2001, or by fax to (02) 9228 6311, or by email to [Peter.Downes@planning.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Peter.Downes@planning.nsw.gov.au) no later than **30 July 2007**. All submissions to the panel may be made publicly available unless you indicate you do not wish this to happen.

## **Content of Submissions**

Submissions should address the terms of reference in order to be considered by the panel during its inquiry. Submissions, or sections of submissions, which are outside the terms of reference may not be considered by the panel.

### **Further Explanation of the Terms of Reference**

The following advice is given to clarify the terms of reference, in order that all submissions are appropriately framed.

The terms of reference focus on an examination of the subsidence-related impacts of underground mining on “significant natural features”. These features are defined within the terms of reference as “rivers and significant streams, swamps and cliff lines.” Other natural features, for example plains, plateaus and general landforms, and any impacts of subsidence on infrastructure assets or buildings or structures are not within the panel’s terms of reference.

However, all values associated with rivers and significant streams, swamps and cliff lines are covered by the terms of reference. This includes Aboriginal heritage, non-Aboriginal heritage, conservation, scenic, recreational and similar values, so long as they are directly associated with these features. In considering impacts on rivers, significant streams and swamps, the panel has been asked to place particular emphasis on “risks to water flows, water quality and aquatic ecosystems”. There are a number of water supply catchments, dams and other assets in the Southern Coalfield. Aquatic ecosystems are considered to include groundwater dependent ecosystems.

### **Panel hearings**

The panel will hold public hearings to hear persons who have indicated that they wish to make an oral presentation in support of a written submission. The hearings will be held in Sydney and Camden during the week beginning Monday 17 September, at locations to be advised.

You must register to make an oral presentation to the panel, as a time will be allocated to each person. To register, call or email the panel’s secretariat before 4:00pm on **30 July 2007**. Please indicate whether you wish to present in Sydney or Camden.

### **Enquiries**

Enquiries can be directed to Peter Downes (02) 9228 6321 or email [Peter.Downes@planning.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Peter.Downes@planning.nsw.gov.au).