



NEWS RELEASE
The Hon. Kristina Keneally MP
Member for Heffron
Minister for Planning
Minister for Redfern Waterloo

Wednesday 17 December, 2008

CHIKAROVSKI WYONG COAL INQUIRY REPORT

Central Coast residents and community groups are being urged to comment on the Wyong Coal Inquiry report, which will be released today for public exhibition.

The report, developed by an independent panel chaired by former Liberal Opposition Leader, Kerry Chikarovski, says mining proposals in the Wyong area can be examined on their merits.

Because the report does not rule out mining around Wyong, the Wallarah 2 proposal will now be subject to rigorous environmental assessment and public scrutiny.

Planning Minister, Kristina Keneally, said community and stakeholder briefings on the Chikarovski report and how the public can have input into the process from here, will take place early next year.

“The Chikarovski report is not a blanket approval for potential mines on the Central Coast, it’s just not a blanket refusal of them,” said Ms Keneally.

“That’s why I’m going to ensure the public has the opportunity to help set the parameters for the Wallarah 2 proposal, as well as provide feedback and input on the proposal itself.

“As a starting point, concerned local residents, environmental groups and local MPs will have a chance to comment on the Chikarovski Report and identify the issues that should be addressed in any detailed environmental assessment of the Wallarah 2 proposal.

“Those important local stakeholders **have until 27 February 2009** to submit their comments to the Department of Planning.

“Those comments, together with recommendations from the report, will help shape the Department of Planning’s detailed environmental assessment requirements for the mining proposal, and ensure the company is required to submit a comprehensive justification of the proposal for public exhibition.”

“The next step will be to ensure another round of public comment and scrutiny during the environmental assessment of the Wallarah 2 proposal. That will allow the local community to comment on the merits of the specific proposal.

“I will also direct the Planning Assessment Commission to conduct an independent review of the key aspects of the Wallarah 2 proposal.

“That will include the Commission conducting public hearings following the public exhibition of the environmental assessment of the Wallarah 2 proposal.

“I’m mindful of the concerns of some members of the community, and will ensure the Commission includes members with the right mix of community consultation and scientific experience.

“The Commission will make recommendations to me about the proposal, which I’ll take into account along with Department of Planning’s recommendations and the views of the public.”

Page 1 of 2



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Ms Keneally said that the key findings of the Chikarovski report are:

- There are no significant reasons why coal mining should not be permitted in Wyong Local Government Area;
- That there is a valuable coal resource in the Wyong Local Government Area worth several billion dollars;
- Mining this resource is unlikely to compromise in any significant way the water supply of the Central Coast; and
- Any new mining proposals in the Wyong Local Government Area should be examined carefully on their individual merits, using independent technical experts to strengthen the rigour of the assessment.

The Chikarovski report also makes recommendations regarding a proposal by Kores Australia Pty Ltd to develop the Wallarah No. 2 Coal Project in Wyong. Those recommendations are:

- Consideration should be given to an independent review of the final Wallarah No 2 Coal Project as part of the Department of Planning's assessment process;
- Noise and dust emissions from the proposed surface facilities should be minimised, given their proximity to residential areas; and
- Kores should apply best practice community consultation, engagement and participation.

A copy of the Chikarovski Report will be available from today at: www.planning.nsw.gov.au

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Background

On 5 February 2007, the former Planning Minister appointed an independent panel to examine and report on:

- 1. Whether coal mining under the catchment of the Mardi Dam would compromise, in any significant way, the water supply of the Central Coast;*
- 2. Environmental impacts of any underground coal mining, with particular emphasis on:*
 - Surface and groundwater resources, especially on drinking water supply and flooding;*
 - Hazards and risks of subsidence impacts; and*
 - The amenity of the community, including dust and noise impacts;*
- 3. Social and economic significance of any underground coal mining to the local community, the region and State; and*
- 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 Governments strategic planning policies that apply to that area.*

The Panel was chaired by Kerry Chikarovski. Other members of the panel were:

- Emeritus Professor Jim Galvin, a subsidence expert;*
- Associate Professor Noel Merrick, a groundwater expert; and*
- Brian Elton, a social impact expert.*

Page 2 of 2