

Wednesday, 20 July, 2011

**Modification approved for Metropolitan Mine, Helensburgh**  
**Response given to Illawarra Mercury**

**Why has the tonnage limit been allowed to increase given the company has not complied with its consent conditions in the past?**

Department of Planning and Infrastructure response:

The mine in fact only breached its consent condition regarding the 120,000 tonnes per year limit for one year – 2010.

It should be noted that before the mine's planning approval in 2009 it operated outside the planning system and had no road tonnage limits. In both 2007 and 2008 more than 140,000 tonnes of coal were trucked off-site, slightly less than the 150,000 tonnes trucked off-site in 2010.

In response to the volumes trucked off-site in 2010, the mine approached the Department to seek a modification of this condition. The Department agreed it was appropriate for the company to lodge a modification for the issue to be properly assessed.

The Department has carefully considered this issue and only allowed the tonnage to increase on the basis that daily caps are placed on the number of trucks along the key haulage routes. These caps will stop a very high number of trucks travelling on single days, which was possible under the previous consent, thereby reducing traffic-related impacts.

For instance, up to 65 trucks each day were travelling to the Coalcliff Cokeworks and up to 30 to Corrimal Cokeworks between 2008 and 2010. Under the new approval, daily truck movements to Coalcliff will be limited to 30 trucks a day and 25 a day to Corrimal.

**What assurances can the department give to community members that consent conditions will be enforced and monitored by the department?**

Department of Planning and Infrastructure response:

The Department monitors compliance of the conditions of approval for the Metropolitan Coal Mine in a variety of ways.

Firstly, the proponent is required to closely monitor traffic, noise and other impacts of the mine, and maintain a register of any complaints lodged. From October 2010, the proponent has been requested to submit an Annual Review that summaries this information and reviews the overall environmental performance of the mine. The Director-General of the Department must be satisfied that the Annual Review addresses, among other things, compliance with the relevant statutory requirements and conditions of approval, including the amount of coal that is trucked off-site.

Secondly, by the end of December 2011, and every 3 years thereafter, the proponent is required to commission and pay the full cost of an Independent Environmental Audit. The independent auditor must be endorsed by the Director-General and the audit must involve consultation with the relevant government agencies. A key component of the audit is to

assess compliance with the conditions of approval and make recommendations for improvements in that regard.

Thirdly, the conditions of approval required the proponent to establish a Community Consultative Committee (CCC). The Metropolitan Mine CCC meets approximately every 2-3 months and comprises members from the local council, recognised environmental groups and the general community. The CCC keeps minutes of meetings, which are regularly submitted to the Department for review.

The conditions of approval also require that certain information is made available on the proponent's website, including a complaints register (updated on a monthly basis), minutes of the CCC meetings, copies of Annual Reviews and copies of Independent Environmental Audits.

In short, the Department takes compliance and ongoing monitoring very seriously. The Department has a dedicated compliance team which will act if it becomes aware of breaches of conditions of consent.