Letter to the Editor of the Mudgee Guardian

Your story about the Director-General’s Requirements (DGRs) issued for the Cobbora Coal Project (‘State ignores Cobbora concerns’, Mudgee Guardian, 21/11/11) requires clarification.

All but three of Mid Western Regional Council’s requests were included in the DGRs and must be addressed in the detailed environmental assessment.

The requirements are framed in language different to Council’s request to ensure consistency in mining related requirements for all projects across the State. Notwithstanding, the department attached Council’s request to the DGRs and asked the proponent to consider these matters in preparing its environmental impact statement.

In relation to the variations from Council’s request, the department is satisfied that they were made for sound reasons in particular:

- Council’s request for an alternative approach to the noise assessment of the project is inconsistent with the NSW Industrial Noise Policy used in the assessment of all industry projects in NSW;
- Council’s request that the proponent be required to assess the potential impacts of extracting water from the Cudgegong River is unnecessary given the proponent has already obtained the necessary water licence to extract water from the river; and
- Council’s request that the proponent be required to assess the viability of the mine is at odds with requirements for other major projects in NSW.

It is also not correct to say that Council’s request for a workshop with key State Government agencies was not adopted. The department has already organised a meeting between Council, the proponent and the relevant agencies at which the key issues were discussed in detail.

The proponent must now consult further with Council in preparing its environmental assessment, while the department is committed to working closely with Council and other government agencies throughout the assessment process.

Finally, it should be noted that the department has agreed to provide funding to Council for an independent expert to review surface and groundwater impacts of the project.

Yours sincerely,

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