RESPONSES GIVEN TO THE NEWCASTLE HERALD RE THE APPROVAL OF WEST WALLSEND COLLIERY AND IMPACTS IN THE SUGARLOAF SCA

QUESTIONS

1. What caused the greater than predicted subsidence and exactly what part of the colliery was responsible for the collapse? What level of subsidence has been recorded?

2. At what depth was the mining taking place and did it involve secondary extraction?

3. Has West Wallsend Colliery exceeded its performance measures as set out in schedule 3 of its project approval? If so, what action has been taken? If not, what level of damage has been recorded?

4. Why did the department allow for secondary extraction of Longwall 41, against the advice of DRE?

5. The department states that it was satisfied that the revised mine plan would result in a significant reduction in the risk of mine-induced rock falls- what has gone wrong in this case?

6. Why wasn't the option suggested by DRE to minimise the panel widths for Longwalls 41 to 43 to minimise subsidence risk, accepted by the department?

7. It is clear from the grouting of the creek that the mine's remediation measures have failed to satisfactorily remediate the environmental impact or environmental consequences, has or is an off-set going to be imposed? Why/why not?

8. I am aware that the remediation project has been halted, is there plans for, or has there been action already taken by the department that would impact on the running of the mine?

9. What action is the department taking in relation to this matter?

10. Can the department assure the community that under the current project approval there will be no further "greater than predicted" subsidence events from this mine? How?

RESPONSE GIVEN on 29 August 2013

Question 1: Based on the Government’s investigations to date, it appears the subsidence is the result of the particular geology encountered within this part of the colliery’s western domain.

Question 2: 180-200 metres. The mining involved secondary extraction using standard longwall techniques.

Question 3: The Government is currently investigating the incident against the performance measures imposed.

Questions 4, 5 and 6: The department did not act against the advice of DRE. Rather, DRE’s input resulted in changes to the mine plan and the department put in place a number of performance measures in response to DRE’s concerns that will require the company to limit environmental impacts across the mining domain.

It should be noted that the concerns raised by DRE predominantly related to the area’s cliff lines, which have not been affected in the subsidence observed within the SCA.
**Question 7:** The Government’s current focus is to require the company to remediate the grouting damage it has caused and a plan is being prepared by the company to do so. Once this work is complete, the Government will reassess the impacts and determine whether any further action, such as an offset, is necessary.

**Question 8:** Not at this stage.

**Question 9:** The department is investigating the incident in conjunction with other relevant agencies and will be attending a site visit tomorrow. These investigations will inform a decision on whether compliance action should be taken against the company.

**Question 10:** While the department’s assessment concluded that the risk of events such as this is relatively low, the conditions of approval were specifically designed to deal with any such instances. This includes the ability to require remediation, mitigation, changes to the mine plan and offsets.