Response given to Seven News on claims about a Departmental employee and the Port Kembla Copper stack demolition

Response sent 13 November 2013

Note: Although the employee was named in our response, the employee was not named in the Channel Seven story and therefore the name and the gender have been removed from this published version of the response. All other information is retained.

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(The employee) works as a planning officer in the Department’s Southern Region, which covers 29 councils.

Like all other public servants in NSW, (the employee) is allowed as a private individual to pursue activities that are of personal interest...as long as this in no way conflicts with...work as a public servant.

As such, (the employee) has agreed with the Department to follow strict measures to ensure there is no conflict.

For instance, since (the employee’s) employment began at the Department, (the employee) has committed to not carry out any work on behalf of the Department in the Wollongong City Council area. The Department has also instructed its regional staff not to verbally discuss Wollongong issues with (the employee).

(The employee) has declared (involvement) at a personal level with a project involving re-use of the Port Kembla Primary School site.

This is not a project that the Department currently has any role in and it is understood that no formal development application has ever been submitted to Wollongong City Council as the consent authority.

Furthermore, neither (the employee) nor the Southern Region team have had a role in the assessment of the proposed demolition of the Port Kembla Stack.

The assessment is being transparently carried out by Department’s Sydney-based assessments branch.

We have just completed a public exhibition of the stack’s demolition and evacuation management plans to ensure the stack demolition happens safely and appropriately.

We are happy to respond to any investigation or complaints on this issue.