



Hon Jeff Seeney MP

Deputy Premier

Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning

Our ref: MC13/150

Your ref: 2100-13

29 MAY 2013

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter of 1 May 2013 forwarding the paper petition 2100-13, as tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 30 April 2013.

The petition draws to the attention of the House that the residents of Taroom are concerned about health and other impacts on residents of a proposed open cut coal mine 3 kilometres (km) from the town of Taroom, as well as coal seam gas developments in the area. The petitioners have requested that no mining applications be granted within 10 km of the township and a 10 km buffer zone be established around the town.

The resource and energy sector is a major economic contributor for Queensland and is one of the four pillars that will drive the Queensland economy. As part of a balanced approach, the government recognises the importance of highest standard environmental practice and social responsibility, and is committed to protecting the health of communities.

While the petition does not mention the name of the open cut mine, I am aware that Cockatoo Coal Limited submitted a Mining Lease Application (MLA) on 21 December 2011 for the proposed North Surat - Taroom Coal project (the project). The boundary of the MLA for this project is located between 3 and 13 km south-west of Taroom township. This project was declared by the Coordinator-General on 14 February 2012 to be a 'coordinated project' requiring an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) under the *State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971*.

The assessment of a coordinated project involves a rigorous, whole-of-government evaluation of the environmental, economic and social effects of the project by the Coordinator-General. It also provides organisations and members of the public the opportunity to comment on the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the EIS, as well as the EIS document.

The Coordinator-General subsequently prepares an evaluation report which includes consideration of issues raised in submissions about the project's EIS.

If approved, the Coordinator-General's evaluation report typically contains conditions for the construction and operation of a project, which must then be included in any further State Government approvals for the development and operation of a mine. Should the Coordinator-General determine that there is a need for a buffer zone around the coal mining operations for environmental or social impact reasons, this condition would be stated in the evaluation report and would become a condition of developing the project.

This project was also declared a 'controlled action' by the Commonwealth Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities under the terms of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. This means that, should the Coordinator-General in his assessment report on the project's EIS recommend the project proceed, it must also be approved by the Commonwealth Minister before construction can start.

The Coordinator-General has advised me that the impact assessment work for the project continues to be progressed by Cockatoo Coal Limited, following the release of the TOR for the project's EIS on 3 July 2012.

Following submission of the EIS on the project by Cockatoo Coal Limited to the Coordinator-General, all members of the public, including petitioners, will have an opportunity to review and comment on the project's EIS through a formal public consultation process, and make a submission to the Coordinator-General about the project.

I encourage the petitioners to participate in the public consultation phase of the project assessment at the appropriate time.

If you require any further information, Mr Jeff Popp in my office will assist and can be contacted on 3224 4600.

Yours sincerely



JEFF SEENEY MP
DEPUTY PREMIER
Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning