



Hon Kate Jones MP
Member for Ashgrove

Ref: CTS 19804/10



**Minister for Climate Change
and Sustainability**

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

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to your letter of 28 October 2010 to the Honourable Stephen Robertson MP, Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and Minister for Trade, enclosing a copy of Petition No. 1554-10 lodged in the Queensland Legislative Assembly.

As the matters raised in the letter fall under my portfolio responsibilities, I will be providing a response.

The Petition relates to the proposal of Northern Energy Corporation Limited to establish an open cut, hard-coking, coal mine at Colton on land described as EPC 1082 and EPC 923 in the Parish of Walliebum, located within the Fraser Coast Regional Council area. The petitioners request that the Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) and the Department of Health (Queensland Health) vote against this mining lease proposal.

I am advised that DERM is currently assessing an application for an Environmental Authority for the proposed Colton Coal mining project. DERM has assessed the Environmental Management Plan (EM Plan) and decided that it did not meet the content requirements as stipulated by the *Environmental Protection Act 1994* (the Act). Northern Energy Corporation Limited now has up to 12 months to resubmit an amended EM Plan to fully address the content requirements.

The Act requires that potential environmental impacts such as dust emissions be addressed in the EM Plan, so that the environmental values of the area surrounding the proposed mine are protected. DERM will also give consideration to the potential for coal dust to impact on human health and this will include consideration of any advice provided by Queensland Health.

The Act also requires that potential environmental impacts by releases from the proposed mine to water be addressed in the EM Plan. The coal mine proposal will need to demonstrate that the environmental values of any rivers receiving water from the proposed mine, including the Mary and Susan Rivers, are protected.

If Northern Energy Ltd is unable to adequately address potential environmental impacts then DERM will not support the project.

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As a point of clarification, the mine operations, if approved, will be restricted to the mining leases applied for in relation to the project, and only exploration activities are permitted in the broader areas covered by the exploration permits EPC 1082 and EPC 923 mentioned in Petition No. 1554-10.

Should you have any further enquiries, please do not hesitate to contact Mr Tim Brain, of the Department of Environment and Resource Management, on telephone 4121 1800.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kate Jones', is written over the 'Yours sincerely' text.

Kate Jones MP
Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability