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Research Director
Agriculture and Environment Committee
Parliament House
BRISBANE QLD 4000

**Re: Environmental Protection (Underground Water Management) and
Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to express my concerns over the proposed underground water management legislation – *Environmental Protection (Underground Water Management) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016*. More specifically my comments relate to the impact of the proposed legislation on the mining lease approval process for Stage 3 of the New Acland Coal Mine.

To date, New Hope Group has done everything asked in its bid to secure a mining lease for the next stage of the New Acland mine near Oakey. As such, they have been required to submit and then resubmit their application on a number of occasions, primarily due to every changing requirements. This process has been going on for over eight years. The company had the foresight to start the process well in advance of the existing stage exhausting the available reserves of coal to ensure a smooth transition from Stage 2 to Stage 3. Currently the company is awaiting a recommendation from the Land Court with regards to this matter.

Due to this extraordinarily long process there is now some doubt as to whether or not the coal output from the mine will be able to continue uninterrupted from Stage 2 to Stage 3. My understanding is that, at current projections, they may just be able to accomplish this. If the process is further delayed it will certainly have a major impact on local employment (and the subsequent follow-on economic impacts to the region) and it will do significant damage to the State's reputation as a reliable supplier of economic, high quality thermal coal to the world market.

Many others in the south-east of the state will also be affected if supply from the New Acland mine is disrupted. Most of the coal currently produced in southern Queensland comes from the New Acland mine and therefore this will have significant impact on the need for rail and port facilities – and therefore employment in these sectors.

I am currently employed at Queensland Bulk Handling which manages the coal terminal at the Port of Brisbane. New Hope coal currently accounts for about 80% of the coal that goes through the terminal. Without a smooth transition at the New Acland mine, there will need to be job cuts at the terminal as the New Acland coal represents such a large proportion of the work. I currently have dependent children at school and university and, like many people in the community, I still have a mortgage to pay. The loss of my job would be devastating for me and my family.

The coal industry has seen a massive downturn in the past few years. New Hope is one of the few companies who are prepared to continue to invest in the long-term future of the industry. They have shown considerable patience and resilience throughout the whole of the mine lease application process for the continuation of the New Acland mine. My understanding is that this proposed legislation may result in New Hope again having to go before the Land Court. It is not fair that a project that has already been through the Land Court process to have to do so again. (It should be noted that the ground water, and the potential impacts of the Stage 3 lease, was discussed for two weeks in the recent Land Court hearing).

I would consider a fairer outcome to be for better transitional arrangements for projects in the latter stages of the approval process – especially for one that has gone on for eight years.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Michael Raff', with a stylized, cursive script.

Michael Raff