

7th October 2016

To
Research Director
Agriculture and Environment Committee
Parliament House
BRISBANE QLD 4000

I am writing to voice my concern regarding the likely impact of the Queensland Government's proposed legislation titled **"Environmental Protection (Underground Water Management) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016"** and introduced to the Parliament on 13th September 2016.

The community has the right to expect that all projects, including resource, agricultural and infrastructure projects are carried out with appropriately robust protective measures regarding ground water. Planning for the New Acland Mine (NAC) expansion based on the mine's application for a new Mining Lease is at a very advanced stage. Requirements for environmental approvals have been set out in NAC's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) submission to the Department of Coordinator General (CoG); ground water formed a major part of that submission. The CoG imposed sets of conditions to ensure every aspect of the legislation was satisfied. Part of the CoG process involved multiple public notification processes and the hearing of objections in the Land Court.

The approvals process for the granting of NAC's Mining Lease has been under way for a number of years. Indeed, a completed EIS was in place before the previous Government was elected, but had to be discarded because of comments by political candidates during that election campaign. The subsequent reduction in scale of the NAC mine output was not premised on optimised market economics, but imposed as a result of glib statements from politicians. The cost and time involved in preparation of an EIS is enormous. This external influence resulted in that huge investment being wasted. Preparation of an entirely new EIS, based on reduced mine output has imposed significant costs on the organisation in a time of depressed world coal prices. Worse still, the current EIS/AEIS process has added years to the approvals time line. NAC's Mining Lease Application process was initiated well in advance of mine closure, but subsequent actions imposed upon the organisation have led to such delays that the granting of a Mining Lease is still some way off. Exhaustion of current reserves and subsequent mine closure is approaching such that continuity of the operation is in serious jeopardy. The livelihoods of hundreds of families will be affected. The resource industry cannot operate effectively in the current environment of protracted bureaucratic processes and continually changing political landscape.

The above proposed legislation is a prime example. The Board of Directors of New Hope Group cannot responsibly approve capital expenditure for the NAC expansion without a Mining Lease. Once the ML is granted, the NAC operation will struggle to get the mine upgrade in place before completion of Stage II mining. As already stated, maintaining continuity of operation into Stage III is in jeopardy as it is. This proposed legislation will only add to the difficulty and time delay already in place. Other projects at similarly advanced stages of approval will be affected in the same way.

I urge therefore that the proposed legislation be amended to exempt projects at an advanced stage, like New Acland's expansion, especially ones that have been through the CoG's EIS process and Land Court process.

Yours sincerely,



Michael Rodgers