



Speech by

**Hon. Jeff Seeney**


**MEMBER FOR CALLIDE**

Hansard Wednesday, 30 May 2012

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## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Alpha Coal Project

 **Hon. JW SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning) (2.10 pm): Yesterday I announced that, after a four-year assessment process, the Coordinator-General had approved the Alpha Coal Project and his 387-page report was made public. The Coordinator-General's office carried out a thorough and extensive evaluation of the environmental assessment work done by the proponent into the potential impacts of this proposed mine development to reach that point. The assessment began in 2008 when the proposal was declared a 'significant project'—a declaration that begins a comprehensive assessment process that must be followed by proponents in accordance with the State Development and Public Works Organisation Act.

Under a bilateral agreement between Queensland and the Commonwealth to reduce duplication of environmental assessment and regulation, in January 2009 it was agreed that the Coordinator-General's evaluation of the environmental impact statement for the Alpha Coal Project would be relied upon by both state and federal governments to decide on approvals for the mine. This sequential decision making is what can clearly delay projects, as we have seen in the past, but it is one that we are bound by and have adhered to in accordance with the bilateral agreement on environmental assessment. The bilateral agreement provides for a copy of the assessment report to the federal environment minister 'as soon as reasonably practicable' and 'not more than 10 business days' after the report is provided to the Queensland minister.

I received the Coordinator-General's report yesterday and I announced the results of his evaluation and made the report public yesterday. A copy of the report, as required under the bilateral agreement, was sent to the federal minister for environment today. This morning I was somewhat dismayed to see the federal minister quoted in today's *Australian* newspaper as saying that Queensland 'fell short of the federal standard', that the assessment had not been completed and that the Coordinator-General had 'stopped at the state level'.

It appears that there is some confusion regarding the current status and the process of approvals and assessments between the state and Commonwealth on this matter. This morning I met with the Coordinator-General and I can confirm that his advice is that all of the matters the Commonwealth raised with regards to this project that are within the scope of the bilateral agreement have been addressed in his report. I am confident that the Coordinator-General's evaluation is complete and can be relied upon by both levels of government to make approvals decisions. The Coordinator-General has the authority to do the assessment, make approvals decisions on state matters and send his report to the federal minister as the basis for the minister to make approval decisions on federal matters. Federal issues are covered in Chapter 11 of the Coordinator-General's report. Some 55 pages of that report deal with 'Matters of national environmental significance'. That chapter is a consideration of this 800-page document which is part of the EIS.

If the bilateral process is followed, the federal minister would make decisions based upon that section of the EIS report and the summary report that was released by the Coordinator-General yesterday.

Under the federal EPBC Act, there is a 30-day defined time frame in which the federal minister is required to make that decision. I hope that, given the significance of this project to the future of all Queenslanders, the federal minister makes that decision within the required time frame.

This is a major project that will contribute significantly to economic activity in this country and to the wellbeing of generations of future Queenslanders. It is about earning the money that future governments will use to build the schools, hospitals and roads for the next generation of Queenslanders. The Alpha Coal Project is of the highest economic significance to both the state and Commonwealth governments. I will be working closely with the federal minister and his office to ensure that the set-down time frames are met.