

Submission to: **The Review by NSW Productivity Commissioner into the Independent Planning Commission**

Based on my firsthand experience of having recently been through the approvals process for a State Significant Project – a modification - that was the subject of determination by the IPC, I make the following observations as to why the IPC must remain an independent body overseeing these projects.

1. The relationship between the proponents of State Significant Projects and the DPIE is far too cosy. In some cases, proponents are having daily discussions with DPIE staff, where concerned locals have very rare opportunities with DPIE staff. This presents a very uneven playing field with stakeholder engagement too little too late. There is a serious lack of trust in the system, which is overwhelmingly in favour of the proponent.
2. In my case the DPI Office of Water in Dubbo was advised by the DPIE not to speak or meet with me or local landholders about the proposal and its likely impact on my water. We have genuine concerns as adjoining landholders about the impacts of the project affecting the local groundwater supplies. The DPIE does not provide an open and transparent process, where it often shuts down other government departments.
3. In another situation, the DPIE dismissed without investigation a technical report the local community had prepared about the flow of surface water throughout the project site.
4. In the case of this project the DA was granted in 2001, but in 2017, even though the project had been mothballed without any substantive development for all that time, the DPIE contemporised many of the long-standing consent conditions. The changes were made with the support of the proponent but without any local stakeholder consultation. This represents extreme bias by the DPIE.
5. I believe the IPC meeting which considered this project and our concerns was one where we were genuinely listened to and although not all our concerns were addressed, some important aspects of the project were modified. The project was approved by the IPC.

I therefore fully support the IPC remaining a fully independent body to oversee State Significant Projects.

My local community feels the NSW Government, Government Ministers and the DPIE are only concerned with the project, royalties and jobs, and to hell with local landholders, local communities and the long-term effect on the local environment.

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