



Caroona Coal Action Group Inc.



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NSW Productivity Commissioner

### **Submission Re: Review by NSW Productivity Commissioner into the Independent Planning Commission**

The Caroona Coal Action Group Inc. represents farmers of the Liverpool Plains in north-west NSW opposing the proposed Shenhua Watermark open cut coal mine.

We welcome the opportunity in providing our submission to enhance the authority of the IPC. Recognising the definition of independence ‘free from outside control; not subject to another’s authority’,

The Independent Planning Commission was established as a consent authority for state significant developments in NSW and affirm: ‘We are committed to building community confidence and trust in the decision- making process for major development and land use planning by maintaining a high level of independence, expertise and transparency.’

In 2014 the Planning Assessment Commission conducted two hearings in Gunnedah. We evidenced blatant interference from DPE. These concerns were taken to Federal and State politicians. Minister Hunt, then Federal Minister for the Environment responded positively. The State did not respond.

With the establishment of the new authority, IPC, we had hoped things would change. We believe the new authority has endeavoured to meet its terms of reference, but the proponents in the mining industry will not abide by the ‘referee’ (IPC).

Our concerns:

- The Independent Planning Commission must be totally independent from the DPE and other government departments. This includes operating with an independent secretariat.
- Resources to be given to allow unfettered capacity to engage expert services of their own choosing to address matters of public interest.
- IPC to be sufficiently funded to do their own thorough enquiry into submissions and key professional information. IPC needs to be more inquisitorial of key witnesses and

“We must ensure mining does not destroy our environment, agricultural production, people’s livelihoods, health and attachment to the land”



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submissions. No reliance from DPIE information or the proponent. IPC should not be beholden to following DPIE assessment reports. Capacity for IPC to re-engage with affected landholders and communities, when necessary.

- Information from the proponent re their developments must be open and transparent. IPC to be privy to all meetings between DPE and proponents, local government and other industry groups and stakeholders (EPA, DPI Water etc.).
- Regrettably there is still little stakeholder engagement, it is often too little and tokenistic. Why is the proponent still allowed to assess the legitimacy of material in the EIS submissions. It is imperative that trust and confidence be established for the community at large.
- The process should involve the Auditor General or Environmental Ombudsman to undertake annual governance audits.



For and behalf of  
Caroona Coal Action Group Inc.  
07/11/2019

