

Review of the Independent Planning Commission

This submission is on behalf of Climate Action Newcastle, a not for profit and non-aligned community group.

In relation to the terms of reference:

1. *Whether it is in the public interest to maintain the Independent Planning Commission (IPC).*

We strongly support the retention of the IPC, for the following reasons:

ICAC has recommended the IPC as a measure against corruption of the planning system. We have recent experience of corrupt planning practices with the Hunter Valley and have no wish to revisit those days.

The coal mining industry has a long history of capture of the regulators in NSW and we need to keep the independence of the planning process afforded by the IPC.

Our community in the Hunter Valley has little faith in the independence of Planning NSW/ political parties and relies on the IPC to provide a balanced assessment of mining proposals.

2. *Recommendations on the IPC's operations and mechanisms by which state significant development is assessed.*

We support the recommendations of ICAC that the Commission has quasi-judicial status, members are full time and the appointment process is open to the public.

We believe the IPC should have all the resources it asks for in order to undertake an independent process and should not have to rely on NSW Planning or other government departments.

We consider it inappropriate in state significant developments where all the power for approval is vested in the minister and Planning NSW. Some check on power is required.

We would like to see policy that clearly indicates what level of impact on communities and environment is deemed unacceptable.

Providing that policy and an impact threshold for new development would give comfort and certainty to both the community and the mining proponent.

3. *Identify any proposed changes to IPC's functions, processes and resourcing*

CAN wants any member of the public to be able to attend and address public hearings. Currently, the IPC's guideline for public hearings does not guarantee any interested member of the public the ability to present to the Commission. Given that these hearings extinguish legal appeal rights, this is a breach of fairness.

██████████ on behalf of Climate Action Newcastle

17/11/2019
Newcastle

