

## Advice to decision maker on coal mining project

### Proposed action: Coal Mine Project

<b>Requesting agency</b>	Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities
<b>Date of request</b>	25 May 2012
<b>Project title</b>	Aquila Resources – Washpool Mine Project, Qld (EPBC 2009/5240)
<b>Summary of request</b>	<p>The Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (the department) is currently assessing the Washpool Mine Project (2009/5240) in accordance with the provisions of the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> (the EPBC Act).</p> <p>The department is seeking the advice of the Interim Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and Coal Mining (the interim committee) on water-related impacts on matters of national environmental significance (MNES); including the impact of the activity on water resources and the environmental values that this water supports. Specifically, the department seeks comments on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Given the mitigation measures proposed by the proponent, are there likely to be residual impacts on the EPBC vulnerable listed Fitzroy River turtle (<i>Rheodytes leukops</i>) species?</li> <li>2) Are there likely to be cumulative impacts of multiple open cut mines in the area in relation to possible flood events? See additional information noted in Section 6 (community concerns) of the Request for Advice.</li> <li>3) Are there additional conditions (to the draft departmental conditions proposed) required to adequately manage potential surface waters, flooding and groundwater issues in order to minimise associated impacts on MNES?</li> <li>4) Can the interim committee identify and make comment on any concerns it has on the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) assessment report (Attachment B) in regards to water issues and the vulnerable listed species, the Fitzroy River turtle?</li> </ol> <p>The Australian Government's decision is due on 25 June 2012. The department requests comments for incorporation by this date.</p>

#### Advice

- 1) The interim committee notes that even though the proposed project is small in scale, inadequate information on its environmental impacts has been provided.
- 2) At a minimum, the interim committee suggests a regional and site water balance should be developed, along with a regional groundwater model and an assessment of flood risks and regional

cumulative impacts.

- 3) The interim committee advises that no assessment of cumulative impacts was undertaken by Aquila. It is foreseeable that the Washpool mine will contribute to cumulative impacts on water resources and potentially any water dependant MNES within the catchment.
- 4) There was sufficient information contained within the EIS to identify clear risks of impacts from the proposed mining activities on the Fitzroy River turtle. For example, impacts were identified to nesting and breeding habitat. However, there was insufficient information provided to quantify the likelihood or consequence of these negative impacts. For example, adequate aquatic fauna field surveys were not conducted, adequate baseline water quality monitoring was not undertaken and the surface-groundwater interconnectivity was not established.
- 5) Ideally, the interim committee suggests a condition to require a site and regional water balance be developed which includes (but is not limited to): surface and groundwater interactions, implications on flow patterns and other water resource impacts of the project. The condition should also require the proponent to undertake a risk assessment of potential impacts to water-dependant values.
- 6) The interim committee notes that there will be significant impacts on topography and fluvial geomorphology, and recommends that in the next phase of the project planning consideration should be given to site remediation. For example, restoring the topography to minimise impacts to ephemeral streams.
- 7) The interim committee notes that the Washpool coal mine proposal has been granted approval under the Queensland Government approval process as the submitted EIS did not identify impact of sufficient magnitude to prevent the project from proceeding. However, as there was insufficient information in the EIS, the Queensland Government were unable to recommend a complete set of draft Conditions (Department of Environment and Heritage Protection, 2012).

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**Date of  
advice**

29 June 2012

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