

25 Old Buttai Rd
Buttai.2323.
31.03.11

Mr Alan Moroney
Dept of Planning

Dear Mr Moroney,

**RE: CONCEPT PLAN (MP 10_0093) – BLACK HILL EMPLOYMENT LANDS
(NORTHERN ESTATE)**

I am writing to object to the proposed Concept Plan for the Coal & Allied land at Black Hill. My reasons for objecting are as follows:

- I value the rural character of Black Hill/Buttai – that is why I came to live in this area. I don't think it is too dramatic to say that this plan could spell the end of Black Hill as we know it, ultimately turning the area between Blackhill Rd and John Renshaw Drive into an industrial eyesore like Weakleys Drive. The Environmental Assessment says "Potential exists for similar employment generating uses to occur in adjacent lands in future". **IF** industrial development is allowed to gain a toehold south of John Renshaw Drive, **it should be restricted to the Coal & Allied land** (in return for conservation lands at Stockrington and the Tank Paddock) and NOT be allowed to spread over the entire area between John Renshaw Drive and Blackhill Rd.
- The response to objections suggests that the riparian zone through the site would form "an important open space component of the site". While it might make the site more pleasant for workers, it does little to maintain the rural character of the area and probably is of little value to local wildlife when surrounded by roads and traffic from 3 600 workers. **The riparian zone should be a minimum of 40m from the top-of-banks of the water course as required by the Water Management Act** (and Dept of Water and Energy submission), rather than trying to dodge this issue by saying Part 3A doesn't trigger this legislation! This is one of the reasons the previous Labor Government has been thrown out – communities are fed up with major developers not having to obey the laws that everyone else has to!
- The only justification for this proposed development is that the area was identified as "employment land" in the Lower Hunter Regional Strategy, despite being identified as "**conservation land**" in the DRAFT Lower Hunter Regional Strategy. It was also identified in the Thornton-Killingworth Strategy as "**Heavily vegetated areas to be retained**". My recollection of the Thornton-Killingworth Strategy is that development was not recommended west of the freeway, due to the lack of services and infrastructure. What has changed?? **If the Government is serious about green corridors, it should be finding a way to conserve this block, not destroy it.** Perhaps the Government should be buying this block from

Coal & Allied in return for their “donation” of the offset lands, rather than bribing them with consent for an unsuitable development!

- No other alternatives to “industrial” use have been considered, solely because the LHRS has manipulatively marked this as “employment land”. We believe that industrial land should remain to the north of John Renshaw Drive. If this block has to be developed, maybe a rural-residential subdivision could be a better outcome in terms of preserving vegetation and minimizing conflict with surrounding rural neighbours. **Proximity to the freeway and employment are strongly attractive characteristics to potential residents as well as industries!** Additional residential blocks could increase enrolments for Black Hill School, which is the fundamental hub for the Black Hill community – the place we gather, meet neighbours, make new friends, communicate and connect.
- No analysis is presented justifying the need for additional “industrial land” at Black Hill. Will the land be cleared and roads put in and then sit there unoccupied for years, as has happened at the Hunter Employment Zone (HEZ)? Is further “industrial” land at Black Hill actually required? **Will this development further delay HEZ, which is located in an area of much higher unemployment?**
- **The proposed buffers around this site are still woefully inadequate at 20m.** We all know that 50m buffers along John Renshaw Drive have done little to screen the Donaldson mine from the road. Fully treed buffers of 50m are required on the north and east to screen from road users and to the south to protect sensitive receptors such as the school and church. The Environmental Assessment suggests the plan will create “an attractive and functional employment location”. **Without proper buffers, it will certainly not be attractive to local residents looking at the back end of an industrial development.** Have the planners actually looked at the Beresfield Industrial Park? Imagine having it as the view from YOUR home! Especially when you (and in some cases, generations of your family) have looked out on a heavily vegetated site, complete with resident bellbirds.
- The Environmental Assessment claims the development will generate 3 600 direct full time jobs. Despite nice words about public transport and cycleways, the reality will be an extra 3 500 cars pouring into and out of the site each day. Considering the traffic **CHAOS** in this area already at peak hours, this is ridiculous to contemplate for locals who must negotiate the roundabout at the end of the freeway on a daily basis. The Hunter Expressway may redirect some of the existing traffic, but natural growth and this development will then return our area to an **infuriating daily traffic snarl! Surely this number of employees represents gross over-development of the site?**
- **Inadequate consultation with the Black Hill community about the “Concept Plan”** – there has been no consultation from Coal & Allied specifically on this “concept plan” and certainly no willingness to discuss our specific concerns – only an overview poster display at Minmi towards the end of last year. If Coal & Allied want feedback from Black Hill, they should arrange a meeting AT Black Hill and at the very least INVITE people who have already lodged submissions,

as well as advertising through the school newsletter and via local community groups who have the interests of the community and environment at heart..

- Of the \$10m allocation for the Northern Lands for “sustainability initiatives and additional infrastructure to support existing residents in surrounding areas, educational or community programs” \$2 million will be spent in the Black Hill area, to ensure that Black Hill receives some compensation for this development. Some of the things they are proposing to spend money on are bizarre eg \$750 000 on a “community facility in close proximity to the church” – (sounds like the COLA we already have at the school!), \$100 000 sponsorship of local sporting teams etc. **If genuine consultation with a cross-section of the community had occurred, some more realistic needs could have been identified.**

I urge the Department of Planning to take advantage of the change of Government in this State and look afresh at how this site can be preserved, rather than being thrown away on an unwanted, unjustified industrial development.

Yours faithfully,

Janet Murray