



RRFC calls for Hawkins Rumker PRIA community consultation period extension

Rylstone, Australia, July 12, 2021 – The Rylstone Region Coal Free Community group welcomed Friday evening's announcement that the community consultation period being conducted as part of the Hawkins Rumker Preliminary Regional Issues Assessment (PRIA) process is to be extended to 18 August 2021; but called for the process to be extended until COVID restrictions are lifted and in-person consultation can take place.

The Hawkins Rumker PRIA process is the first part of a process that, along with the yet to be announced Ganguddy-Kelgoola PRIA, is intended to open up the Upper Cudgegong Valley for coal exploration and exploitation from just east of Bara to Coricudgy.

Written notification had been provided only to directly affected landholders and letters sent barely two weeks prior to the commencement of the PRIA community consultation meetings. Therefore, members of the RRFC – a community group opposed to exploration of coal and approval of new coal mines in the Rylstone region - continually stressed to NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) representatives that the six-week consultation period was too short.

Consequently, DPIE announced on Friday, that it had requested that the NSW Government's Advisory Body for Strategic Release (ABSR) extend the community consultation period past 29 July. “The ABSR has endorsed this request and the Department is now welcoming feedback from the community and other stakeholders until 18 August 2021.”

In-person stakeholder meetings limited to three in Rylstone (pop. circa 3,000 including Kandos) and one in Mudgee (pop. circa 15,000), restricted to 50 people and requiring pre-registration were scheduled but were moved to Zoom in the wake of COVID restrictions. DPIE said, however, it hopes it “can schedule in-person community meetings in Rylstone and Mudgee if COVID-19 restrictions are loosened over the coming weeks.”

“Although the RRFC acknowledges this small extension, DPIE is still yet to address some of the fundamental issues raised about the lack of transparency - the report resulting from the PRIA will not be released to the public before it goes to cabinet. This is contrary to ICAC’s recommendations, and we want to see that report. In addition, we remain concerned about the whole PRIA process being unnecessarily rushed. These decisions will turn our communities’ lives, homes and businesses upside down, potentially destroy precious water and other resources such as good farming land for the region, so why is this being rushed through when coal has such a short-term future?” said an RRFC spokesperson.

“The RRFC remains disappointed that DPIE appears to have been seeking to minimise consultation by restricting session numbers to below what was required by social distancing and then moving the meetings to Zoom. We would welcome an undertaking by the ABSR to extend the consultation period until COVID restrictions are lifted and in-person consultation can take place.

“This region is a rural area with many elderly people who have lived in the region their whole lives as well as workers who don’t sit in front of a computer all day and have no idea what a Zoom meeting is. Community members should be able to engage with the consultation process at any stage using whatever medium suits them. This is a fundamental concept that any organisation with capabilities and a background in genuine community consultation, rather than a company that by its own admission,



'facilitates development approvals for major mining and associated infrastructure project,' would understand and apply."

For media enquiries, contact Darren Baguley; media@rylstonecfc.com or **0409 155 594**.

About RRCFC

The Rylstone Region Coal Free Community (RRCFC) is a self-funded, non-politically aligned community group committed to protecting the Upper Cudgegong Valley and the region around Rylstone and Kandos by stopping further exploration of coal and approval of new coal mines in our region. Our aim is to protect the land, heritage, culture and community for now and future generations by fully informing the community of the implications of the Hawkins, Rumker and Ganguddy-Kelgoola coal exploration releases. For more information about the RRCFC, visit www.rylstonecfc.com; follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).