



RRCFC – flawed Hawkins Rumker project review of environmental factors renders PRIA invalid

Rylstone, Australia, September 15, 2021 – An assessment of the NSW Government’s Review of Environmental Factors (REF) by the RRCFC has found the Hawkins Rumker PRIA process is invalid because the government did not comply with the provisions of its own act.

The NSW Government is currently undertaking the first stage of the Hawkins Rumker Preliminary Regional Issues Assessment (PRIA) 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. The RRCFC contends this process is invalid as the REF undertaken at the beginning of the project, did not comply with NSW *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act* (EP&A Act).

As part of its research, the RRCFC commissioned an assessment of the REF undertaken by NSW Government agencies prior to undertaking drilling operations to provide preliminary geological information. The resulting REF was used as an approval document for the Hawkins Rumker project, however, the review found there were fundamental flaws in the REF.

The REF was prepared for the Hawkins Rumker Project in 2015 by Coal and Petroleum Geoscience Resources & Energy – Maitland Department of Industry under Part 5 of the NSW EP&A Act - as are all REFs. Under the Act, proponents must ‘examine and take into account to the fullest extent possible all matters affecting or likely to affect the environment by reason of that activity’.

RRCFC’s review was limited in its scope, and only considered four aspects of the REF, namely:

1. The proposed activity
2. The assessment of impacts on water
3. The assessment of threatened flora
4. The assessment of Aboriginal heritage

The RRCFC’s review found that the Hawkins Rumker Project REF did not “‘examine and take into account to the fullest extent possible all matters affecting or likely to affect the environment by reason of that activity’. It has not properly assessed the threatened flora in the area, nor the Aboriginal heritage. It does not comply with the EP&A Act and has drawn conclusions based on limited and inadequate assessments.”

Specific failings include: underestimating the area of disturbance ensuing from 27 drill sites by orders of magnitude; inadequate provision for protection of groundwater resources, inaccurate information deriving from an online database with known inadequacies rather than conducting an on the ground ecological assessment, an easily falsified claim there was no Aboriginal heritage in the project area and , yet again, failure to conduct an on the ground assessment “of the area to see if Aboriginal objects can be identified or are likely to be present below the surface.”

As such, the review concluded the approval that relied on the REF is invalid, as the approval is flawed, and as such, the activities associated with it, i.e., the Hawkins Rumker PRIA, should not have proceeded.



The detail

The minimum statutory requirements that must be considered are set out in Clause 228 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000 (EP&A Regulation) and in the guideline Is an EIS required? – Best Practice Guidelines for Part 5 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.

The REF prepared for the Hawkins Rumker project can be found here:

[https://search.geoscience.nsw.gov.au/api/download/149ffadb31749be6d36bbccbb6d2cabb/REF - Hawkins Rumker Project - Exploration Drilling Program- Aug 2015.pdf](https://search.geoscience.nsw.gov.au/api/download/149ffadb31749be6d36bbccbb6d2cabb/REF_-_Hawkins_Rumker_Project_-_Exploration_Drilling_Program-__Aug_2015.pdf)

The review of the REF can be found here:

<https://rylstonecfc.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Limitations-of-the-Hawkins-Rumker-Project-REF-v3.pdf>

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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](#).