

THE NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (NSW)

Policy on the Impacts of Coal Mining

Preamble

The coal industry has been long recognised¹ by the National Trust as forming part of the heritage landscape of the present and many historic coal mines and their associated structures and machinery have been listed on the National Trust Register for their historic and scientific values. Eighty-two coal mining sites in New South Wales are listed on the National Trust's Industrial Sites List and seventeen sites are listed on the National Trust Register. Coal mining has played a key role in the history of European settlement in Australia and these listings reflect this historical and technological significance.

The National Trust recognises the role that coal mining has played in the history of Australia and its economic role at the present time. Nonetheless, this industry is well-recognised as having significant and often detrimental side effects. In the Hunter Valley, seventeen Landscape Conservation Areas were listed on the National Trust Register for their scenic, agricultural, historic and nature conservation significance. Coal mining has threatened the heritage values of a number of these areas. The Trust's Exeter/Sutton Forest Landscape Conservation Area also contains 43 properties individually listed on the National Trust Register and is also currently under threat from coal mining operations. The impact of coal and coal mining on climate change has become a matter of major concern.

Policy

1. The National Trust believes that sustainable development goals should be based upon the three equal pillars² of 1) environmental protection; 2) social development; and 3) economic development and that the economic pillar must not be treated as paramount, to the detriment of social equity and the safeguarding of our natural world for future generations.
2. The National Trust will assert that, in determining economic significance in regions with existing high environmental heritage values, there needs to be included a consideration of the forecasted economic life of a proposed project and the limited short-term economic value of a proposed mining development needs to be compared with and balanced against the long-term economic values of protecting existing viable rural industries.
3. The National Trust will call for the urgent phasing out of thermal coal mining to minimise its impact on climate change and, as alternatives become available will also call for the phasing out of coking coal mining (for steel making) to reduce carbon emissions to zero by 2050.
4. The National Trust believes that, where certification³ by the Office of Environment and Heritage is required for the biodiversity impact of a proposed development, certification should also be required for heritage impact on aesthetic, historic, scientific, cultural, social and archaeological values of individual sites and the entire cultural landscape(s) affected by a proposed development.
5. The National Trust will aim to educate the wider community on the environmental heritage values of sites and landscapes affected by the impacts of coal mining.⁴
6. The National Trust will oppose open-cut coal mining proposals within listed Landscape Conservation Areas or which impact on listed Urban Conservation Areas or significant individually listed items.
7. The National Trust will oppose long-wall coal mining proposals or those sections of a proposal that have the potential to damage significant surface landscape features or to affect water flow in rivers, creeks or wetlands.
8. The National Trust will urge the proper rehabilitation of former mining sites while ensuring that mining relics and items of mining heritage are identified, protected and conserved.

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¹ *National Trust Submission to the NSW Coal & Gas Strategy Scoping Paper*, April, 2011

² *Summary Report – Civil Society Consultation*, Conducted by the UN Non-Government Liaison Service for the UN Secretary General's High-level Panel on Global Sustainability, March 2011

³ *State Environmental Planning Policy (Mining, Petroleum Production and Extractive Industries) Amendment (Resource Significance) 2013 consultation draft*

⁴ *National Trust Industrial Sites List*, The National Trust of Australia (NSW), 1980 - 1990