

Dispelling water assessment myths: facts not fiction

There has been some unfortunate misunderstanding about the Wallarah 2's assessment and approval process under the Commonwealth's Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC Act). This Act introduces potential "triggers" for project assessment, in our case for certain flora and fauna species and communities as well as for water resources (as are all coal and gas projects).

The water resources assessment includes a step where advice is provided by an Independent Expert Scientific Committee (IESC) to the (now) Commonwealth Department of Environment and Energy. For the Wallarah 2 Coal Project, this advice by IESC was provided on 24 May 2013 after it reviewed the DRAFT EIS for the project. Its advice included useful directions for refinements on the modelling and assessment content and also sought further information to clarify monitoring, modelling and mitigation measures. Accordingly, Wallarah 2 responded back to the Department as required and finalised its EIS. The Department issued a letter to the NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure on 22 August 2013 noting: "The department is generally satisfied with the information provided in the EIS, and subsequent water-related information and clarification provided to the department in response to the IESC's advice."

The letter also acknowledged that in May 2013 Wyong Coal provided further information and met with the Department, concluding: "The department is satisfied that the information presented addresses the IESC's concerns regarding the lack of sufficient modelling, monitoring and mitigation information".

Unfortunately, some vocal project objectors have completely misinterpreted the process and have failed to notice that the Department has agreed that the required steps and content of the final EIS work satisfied all outstanding matters. Once again, and regrettably, the opponents continue to lobby hard with local, State and Federal elected representatives on matters of FICTION rather than seek out the FACTS!

Misleading fiction being spread around by some vocal project opponents can result in "misinformation victims". Should any community members or any other stakeholders wish to find out more, please contact our project to get the facts right.

