



Hon Stirling Hinchliffe MP
Member for Stafford



Queensland
Government

Minister for Employment, Skills
and Mining

CLLO/11109

31 OCT 2011

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
Cnr George and Alice Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Neil

Thank you for your letter dated 13 October 2011, forwarding petition number 1787-11. I have considered the petition carefully and am pleased to provide my response.

The Queensland Government is acutely aware of the concerns about mining exploration and development in and around populated areas across the State. I can assure the petitioners that there are many safeguards already in place through the *Environmental Protection Act 1994* and the *Mineral Resources Act 1989* that regulate all resource activities throughout Queensland.

In terms of regulating resource activities, it is important to note the range of resource activities that can occur and the different levels of impact of these activities. Activities under Exploration Permits to test the resource potential are generally low impact. The applicant for a mining lease must present detail on the nature and extent of activities planned for a mine site. Rigorous environment approvals must be obtained for the location of a mine site relative to sensitive receptors such as small towns. The granting of Exploration Permits does not mean that mining will go ahead.

Notwithstanding the current environmental regulatory and compliance regime, I acknowledge the need to further allay communities' concerns about resources exploration in close proximity to populated areas.

On 16 August 2011, I declared Restricted Area 384 over South East Queensland (SEQ), plus a buffer zone of two kilometres (2km) and all towns outside SEQ with a population of 1,000 or more, plus a 2km buffer zone. The buffer zone of 2km is in accordance with existing statutory environmental codes that provide adequate separation of conflicting activities.

Level 18 Mineral House
41 George Street Brisbane 4000
PO Box 15216 City East
Queensland 4002 Australia
Telephone +61 7 3234 1870
Facsimile +61 7 3221 9964
Email esm@ministerial.qld.gov.au
ABN 65 959 415 158

The intent of Restricted Area 384 is to temporarily prevent any new resource exploration application (excluding industry minerals) from being granted in and around urban areas within the restricted area until a long-term solution is introduced into Parliament later this year.

I note the petition demands the prevention of all mining activity from occurring within 15 kilometres of the gazetted town boundary. Mining permits are regulated under the *Environmental Protection Act 1994*. Before any mining activity is granted, it must undergo a rigorous assessment which includes a thorough and transparent environment evaluation and in the case of large projects, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is usually required.

The EIS process is administered by the Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) and in the case of a significant project, the Coordinator-General. An EIS process requires a resource proponent to apply for an environmental authority before its tenure is granted. The authority requires that exploration activities be conducted in accordance with standard conditions of the *Code of Environmental Compliance and Exploration and Mineral Development Projects* (the Code). EIS process provides two opportunities for the community and individuals to lodge submissions.

DERM and the Coordinator-General can both place conditions on the proposed development. These conditions are based on an individual assessment of the project and are therefore customised to reflect its specific potential impacts.

Potential breaches of the Code's conditions are promptly investigated by DERM and, if proven, may lead to prosecution and significant fines.

Any requests for more information about the rigorous environmental process required by resources applications, both exploration permits and mining leases, before permits are granted may be referred to DERM's website at http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/services_resources/

Any questions about this response can be referred to Ms Bernadette McNevin, Director of Land and Resource Policy of the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation, who will be pleased to assist and can be emailed at bernadette.mcnevin@deedi.qld.gov.au

Yours sincerely



Stirling Hinchliffe MP
Minister for Employment, Skills and Mining