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Comments on Issues Paper Review of Load-based Licensing Scheme

Central West Environment Council (CWEC) is an umbrella organization representing conservation groups and individuals in central west NSW working to protect the local environment for future generations.

CWEC supports the review of the EPA Load-based Licensing (LBL) Scheme and considers the regulation of pollution emissions in NSW requires continued improvement.

CWEC endorses the following proposals as raised in the Issues Paper:

1. That all coal and mineral mining and power station pollution emissions be included in the LBL schedule of assessable pollutants
2. That the 'polluter pays' principle be covered by adequate load fees that cause a measurable decrease in pollution emissions
3. That critical zones be expanded to areas with significant cumulative impact from mining and power generation activities.

The Issues Paper identifies that:

`a) The scheduled activity 'mining for coal' is responsible for a significant proportion of the following pollutant emissions in NSW: PM10 to air (75%), chromium to water (75%), selenium to water (71%), arsenic to water (61%), PM2.5 to air (51%), VOCs to air (31%), arsenic to air (23%), PAHs to air (23%), lead to water (23%) and NOX to air (16%).

b) The scheduled activity 'mining for minerals' is responsible for a significant proportion of the following pollutant emissions in NSW: lead to air (80%), arsenic to air (63%) and PM10 to air (15%).

c) The scheduled activity 'coal works' is responsible for 16% of selenium emissions to water in NSW.' (P 40)

Also that:

'the LBL scheme is capturing only a small fraction of the total PM10 emissions to air from industrial activities in NSW and that 'mining for coal' and 'mining for minerals' (neither of which are currently captured by the LBL scheme) clearly dominate the emissions profile when examining NPI data, accounting for around 90% of industrial emissions in 2013–14. This figure also shows that PM10 emissions from coal mining activities have been increasing in the four years from 2009–10 to 2012–13, with a small decrease in 2013–14.

Similarly, the LBL scheme currently only captures a fraction of VOC emissions to air. 'Mining for coal', 'mining for minerals' and 'electricity generation' 28 currently account for around 42% of VOC emissions collectively; however, none of these emissions are captured by the LBL' (p 40)

CWEC considers that the LBL Scheme must be expanded to include these significant pollution emissions. The addition of PM_{2.5} particle emissions is critical to meet the new national air quality standards adopted in 2015.

The scale of coal mining in the western coalfields in the Lithgow and Mid-Western Region LGAs is significant with ongoing pollution of air and waters.

The Mt Piper Power Station is an additional source of unregulated pollution in the region.

The emission of toxic heavy metals into the air and water sources must be prevented through adequate 'polluter pay' load fees. All polluting elements emitted through the production and combustion of coal must be included as assessable pollutants in the LBL Scheme.

CWEC submits that the Lithgow and Mid-Western Region LGAs should be included as critical zones in the LBL Scheme to focus on the cumulative impacts of mining and power generation emissions in these areas.

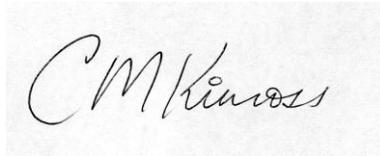
Gold mining and other mineral extraction is also a significant and expanding industry in the Central West. All toxic pollutants from these industries must be included as assessable pollutants on the LBL Scheme.

CWEC looks forward to engaging in the next stages of the LBL Scheme review and trusts that the EPA will take on board the issues raised in this submission.

The community and environment of the Central West should not be carrying the cost shifting burden of a polluted environment.

An improved LBL Scheme that includes all major pollutants emitted from mining and power generation activities will result in a cleaner environment, a healthier community and improved biodiversity in regional waterways.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature reads "C M Kinross" in a cursive, flowing script.

President

Wednesday 21 December 2016