NSW DEPT OF PLANNING STATEMENTS

**INITIAL RESPONSE 21/2/14**

The department takes seriously its role in ensuring that sensible and appropriate economic development in NSW can occur on its merits, balanced with environmental considerations and strong environmental protection.

To do this, the department ensures that all interested parties are able to have their say, seeks expert advice from other government agencies and can place strict conditions on developments including extensive biodiversity offsets when necessary.

The Planning Assessment Commission is the independent panel charged with making the final determination of very large projects such as Maules Creek.

In this case, the Planning Assessment Commission determined to approve the project based on its comprehensive assessment of the merits of the project, public hearings and written submissions.

The final biodiversity offset strategy was also approved by the independent PAC.

The PAC reviewed the offset strategy twice โ€“ during its review of the merits of the proposal and again before it made its final decision.

The PAC held public hearings to ensure that people or interested groups had plenty of opportunity to raise any issues or concerns.

The PAC visited the site during its review of the project.

In completing its assessment the department took into consideration the advice of a number of other government agencies, particularly the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage.

Department officials also visited the site several times during the assessment. Representatives of other key agencies visited the site during the planning process as well.

The project was publicly exhibited from the end of August until the middle of October 2011 again ensuring that any interested parties had plenty of opportunity to have their say.

The final approval included an extensive biodiversity offset strategy comprising over 8,500 hectares of native vegetation including various Endangered Ecological Communities โ€“ more than five times the 1,600 hectares of forest that will be cleared within the project disturbance boundary.

The Department, OEH and the PAC were satisfied that the proposed offsets would adequately compensate for the loss of part of the Leard State Forest as a result of the proposed mining.

Further details about the Department's and PAC's consideration of these matters can be found at [www.majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au](http://www.majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au)

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***After further questioning from Background Briefing about whether the NSW government had conducted independent surveys of the Maules Creek offset properties, the NSW Dept of Planning provided the following final statement:***

**FINAL RESPONSE** 28/2/14

The independent Planning Assessment Commission made the final determination about the adequacy of the offset strategy.

In preparing its assessment, Planning and Infrastructure sought extensive ecological information from the company, which provided documentation prepared by recognised ecological experts.

Planning and Infrastructure received submissions from the Office of the Environment and Heritage as well as submissions from various environmental groups - all of which were considered in the assessment.

The independent Planning Assessment Commission subsequently made the final determination based on this information.

All this information is available publicly at [www.majorprojects.nsw.gov.au](http://www.majorprojects.nsw.gov.au)