

Christine Hammond - Introduce yourself.

Darkinjung is a Local Aboriginal Land Council established under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act or ALRA. The ALRA was enacted to provide some remedy for the injustice of the dispossession of Aboriginal people from their lands.

The objects of Darkinjung are “to improve, protect and foster the best interests of all Aboriginal persons within the Council’s area and other persons who are members of the Council.” The ability of Aboriginal land councils to hold land and develop it is recognition by Parliament of the need for Aboriginal people to be compensated for their past dispossession. It is also a recognition that Parliament has determined that it is in the public interest that Aboriginal people should be able to use such land to pursue the remedial and beneficial objects of the ALRA, including pursuing the economic advancement of Aboriginal people.

Only limited lands are claimable under the ALRA. That means that the total amount of land available for Aboriginal people to pursue economic objectives is limited. This puts particular pressure on land councils to achieve outcomes on the limited land that has been transferred to their ownership.

Darkinjung are the largest private land holder on the Central Coast with 3,500 hectares owned and 3,500 hectares under claim. With less than 10% of Darkinjung’s lands being developable our economic opportunities are limited. Our financial ability to manage and sustain

the remaining 90% of our land holdings, which are cultural and environmental in nature, is limited as a result of these constraints. Darkinjung has been part of a NSW Government inter-agency taskforce since 2012 that was set up to identify economic opportunities on our landholding across the North Wyong Region including the Bushells Ridge area. As you are aware this culminated in the lodgement of a multi-site rezoning application in June 2014. The Department's report to the PAC dated 19 May 2017, stated, in respect to Darkinjung claims, that the Wallarah 2 amended application, will adversely impact nearby residential rezoning proposals. The view of the PAC, however, appears to be that the rezoning proposals are still at an early stage, and that it is too early to make recommendations or condition a potential approval in regard to how future residences would be affected. Darkinjung argues that this is not the case. It is not too early as the current planning proposals have progressed rapidly. Since May 2017, the NSW government has implemented a number of actions that have quickly progressed Darkinjung's planning proposals.

The Minister for Planning appointed a Coordinator General for the Central Coast, Lee Shearer. Ms Shearer's role is to ensure that the initial planning has occurred over a period of 2 years to enable the goals set down in the Department of Planning's Regional Growth Plan 2036 to be achieved.

The Department of Planning, through the Coordinator General has established monthly meetings with Darkinjung in response Direction 6 of the Central Coast Regional Plan 2036 that sets a strategy to strengthen the economic self-determination of Aboriginal communities. I urge you to refer to the Central Coast Regional Growth Plan.

Darkinjung has instructed the specialist consulting team investigating and reporting on each aspect of the rezoning proposals to finalise their reports with the intention of submitting them to the Department in early December 2017. This will enable the Planning Proposals to be placed on public exhibition early 2018. Houses could (potentially) be built along Bushells Ridge Road before works commence on the Wallarah 2 coal mine.

If a decision to approve Wallarah 2 Coal Project is forthcoming it could be reasonably viewed as an example of confused or biased decision. On one hand the Department of Planning have been engaging Darkinjung's expertise to develop and improve how they work with Aboriginal land owners to achieve economic outcomes and on the other hand they fail to recognise Aboriginal land owners right to economic development by (potentially) approving

the development of a coal mine that will adversely affect their future development.

Each of Darkinjung's economic development opportunities has a corresponding benefit for the Aboriginal community of the Central Coast that will arise from the project. Our recently completed residential subdivision at Blue Haven will result in the construction of 22 homes that will be provided to our members under our Affordable Housing Policy. Blue Haven also provided funding that allowed Darkinjung to protect an important Aboriginal woman's site located at Calga that was under threat from expanding mining interests. The Agreement to Lease executed by CASA Supporters In and Darkinjung at Bushells Ridge includes an agreement that 20% of all employment on the site will be allocated to the Aboriginal community of the Central Coast. Benefits arising from the Amended DA are no match to those benefits that Darkinjung is already providing.

The decision of the PAC will affect Darkinjung's ability to provide such benefits into the future as Wallarah 2 Coal Mine and the associated coal loading facility will affect the market for residential property across Bushells Ridge and Doyalson. There is no doubt in my mind that such a decision will have a substantial effect on Darkinjung's economic development plans in Bushells Ridge, Wallarah and Doyalson.