



STATEMENT OF POLICY – COAL MINING AND COAL SEAM GAS

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1.1 Objectives:

The proposed statement of policy establishes a cohesive policy position with regard to coal mining and coal seam gas in the City of Ipswich by:

- Recognising the significant contribution that coal mining has made to the city, as reflected in the built and cultural heritage, and the need to continue to record, protect and commemorate this;
- Acknowledging the continuing contribution of currently operating coal mines to the economy and community of Ipswich;
- Recognising that the form and scale of coal mining has changed over time and the great increase in impacts associated with large scale open cut coal mining operations;
- Stating that coal mining is largely incompatible with the continuing urban growth of Ipswich as provided for in the South East Queensland Regional Plan and maintaining the significant environmental agricultural, recreational and scenic values, and the liveability of the city;
- Stating that Council does not support the granting of new tenures or approvals that would allow new coal mines to open or expand beyond their existing lease boundaries and that Council will work in partnership with the State government and coal mining companies to extinguish existing coal tenures where possible; and
- Stating that as a prudent and precautionary approach owing to the largely untested nature of coal seam gas extraction (and related processes), significant concerns regarding the environmental impacts and incompatibility with urban growth, Council does not support the granting of tenures or approvals that would allow either exploration for, or the extraction of coal seam gas.

Coal Mining – Historical Background

Ipswich City Council acknowledges the important contribution that coal mining has made historically to the establishment and development of the city, particularly during the 19th and 20th centuries. The presence of coal greatly influenced the early settlement of Ipswich through attracting migrants who worked in mining and formed the early communities of Ipswich, and is reflected in the built and cultural heritage of the city that Council will continue to record, protect and commemorate. Coal mining provided direct employment and support for families, and also supported allied industries, particularly associated with the development of the railways and the electricity industry, and other industries that provided services and products to mining companies. These benefits remain in terms of the operation of existing coal mines in the city and the supporting allied industries, as well as for members of the coal mining industry who continue to live in Ipswich but work outside the city.

Changing Times

The methods of extracting coal have changed over time from underground workings to open cut mining. The scale of extraction and the extent of impacts associated with coal mining have greatly increased but the level of employment in coal mining in Ipswich has declined. At the same time, Ipswich has continued to grow with more people now calling Ipswich home, and this will continue under the South East Queensland Regional Plan into the future as Ipswich cements its place as the major contributor to urban growth in the SEQ western corridor whilst maintaining the significant environmental, agricultural, recreational and scenic values of its rural areas and liveability of its urban areas and townships.

The changed form and scale of coal mining means that the development of new coal mines has now become largely incompatible with the role of the City of Ipswich in South East Queensland. Whilst the economic benefit of the continued operation of existing coal mines is acknowledged and their continued operation supported, Ipswich City Council does not support the granting of new tenures and approvals that would allow new coal mines to open in the Ipswich Local Government Area, or to continue to expand beyond their existing mining lease boundaries. Council will also work in partnership with the State government and the coal mining companies to extinguish existing coal mining tenures where possible.

It is recognised that the transition away from coal mining in the city as existing mining operations work out their remaining lease reserves may impact on people who are directly employed in mining and on businesses that support coal mining in Ipswich. Ipswich City Council is committed to assisting those affected where it is able. To help facilitate the transition, Ipswich City Council also supports the rehabilitation of mined land to a standard that supports appropriate reuse of the land for urban and rural purposes.

Coal Seam Gas

As outlined above the City of Ipswich has a major role in accommodating urban growth in the western corridor of South East Queensland. The city also encompasses significant areas with important environmental, agricultural, recreational and scenic values. The city also contains critical parts of the catchments of both the Brisbane and Bremer Rivers. Given the largely untested nature of coal seam gas extraction (and related processes) and the significant concerns regarding the impacts, particularly on groundwater systems, Ipswich City Council as a prudent and precautionary approach does not support the granting of tenures or approvals that would allow either exploration for, or the extraction of coal seam gas in the Ipswich Local Government Area. The extraction of coal seam gas is considered to be incompatible with the urban growth and important environmental values of the Ipswich Local Government Area.

1.2 Policy Author: Strategic Planning Manager

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