

MEDIA RELEASE

Adani Mining: Enough is enough. The Queensland Government needs to stop shifting the goal posts

Queensland's Department of Environment and Science (DES) is seeking to further delay finalisation of the Carmichael project's Groundwater Dependent Ecosystem Management Plan (GDEMP), by once again engaging in a secretive and non-transparent additional review process.

This is at odds with the department's previous commitments and smacks of the type of tactics it has employed to delay and frustrate sign-off of the Black-Throated Finch Management Plan.

Advice provided by DES officials on Friday suggests the department now intends to renege on its February commitment to no further reviews and has instead shifted the goalposts once again and requested another round of information and assessment from CSIRO and Geoscience Australia, despite previously ruling this out.

DES officials would not confirm to Adani Mining what the scope and nature of the requests were or if the requests were in fact limited solely to assessing the Carmichael Project's environmental conditions.

Adani Mining CEO Lucas Dow said the department's request was the latest delay tactic designed to stop construction of the Carmichael Project and the delivery of thousands of jobs for regional Queenslanders.

"DES has consistently said it would not pursue further reviews," he said.

"However, they have gone back on their word once again.

"We are now facing prospect of another tortuous and never-ending management plan approval process like the one we have endured for the Black-Throated Finch.

"It appears this process will again go beyond the scope of what our project is required to deliver under regulatory conditions – and put simply is simply another fishing expedition."

The Federal Government approved Adani's GDEMP on 9 April 2019, following an eight-month assessment. This included expert review and advice from CSIRO and Geoscience Australia that has been shared with DES.

Earlier this year, DES said it would rely on the same review process and information from CSIRO and Geoscience Australia provided to the Federal Government. In a media statement on 18 February this year, DES stated:

"Recent media reports have suggested the Queensland Government could require its own review of the GDEMP, however this is not the case."

"We asked on Friday for the scope of this latest round of CSIRO and Geoscience Australia requests and DES refused to provide us with such details then," Mr Dow said.

"The Department's processes, timing and decision-making have zero transparency. Trying to see what needs to be done to ensure these management plans can be signed off is like trying to see through a brick wall – there is absolute zero transparency.

"If this latest request for further information and assessment was above board and in-line with the Carmichael Project's conditions, why is there a need for secrecy and non-disclosure?"

"We call on DES to provide Adani with the precise questions given to CSIRO and Geoscience Australia and also confirm that they are not initiating another review and that any such clarifications are solely limited to ensuring that Adani has met its environmental conditions and that they are not engaging in another Black-Throated Finch-type review process. After all this is Adani's plan they are investigating."

Mr Dow said that Adani Mining had respected and actioned the previous advice received from CSIRO and Geoscience Australia via the Federal Government and acknowledged the organisations' expertise and contribution to the improvement of the current water management plans.

"CSIRO and Geoscience Australia have reviewed the groundwater management plans in-line with our project environmental conditions, providing sound advice and guidance to the Federal and State Government," he said.

"On the basis of this advice we updated our plans to incorporate recommendations that corresponded with our conditions.

"We are not arguing the toss with respect to CSIRO and Geoscience Australia's involvement or expertise. Our issue and concern is the way in which the Queensland Government continues to act," he said.

"The manner in which our plans are now being assessed by the Queensland Labor Government has gone well beyond the legitimacy of the science. Of course scientists should contribute to the delivery of management plans, as they have done in our case.

"Considering DES has already been reviewing the water management plans for more than two years, across 11 versions, and had access to CSIRO and Geoscience Australia's assessments, the requirement for further information and delays at this point is not just extraordinary, it is an injustice through process," he said.

Mr Dow said DES' move towards a secondary CSIRO and Geoscience Australia review was further evidence of the Queensland Labor Government shifting the goal posts for Adani Mining.

"We are 1 of 125 coal mining companies in Australia. We should all be subject to the same legislation, regulations, approval processes and standards," Mr Dow said.

"In the past six months alone we have seen the Queensland Labor Government insist on additional review processes headed by individuals who lead organisations with members who harbour anti-coal sentiments, put in place ongoing delays and continually ask for commitments well beyond our regulated project conditions, while waving other Queensland coal mines through approvals processes.

"They have even labelled us bullies, all because we have publicly held them to account for their behaviour and asked to be treated fairly and on the same terms as other Queensland coal companies," he said.

This past weekend also marked two years since Adani Mining first submitted the Black-Throated Finch Management Plan to the Queensland Government for approval on 11 May 2017.

Over the past two years, seven versions of the plan have been submitted to the Queensland Department of Environment and Science, consisting of more than 1,000 pages of advice that have been assessed and verified by more than 10 different scientists, five environmental consultancy groups and even a Land Court judge.

Adani Mining also recently had independent ecologists, Biodiversity Assessment and Management Pty Ltd, assess the veracity of the plan, with their key findings stating:

"Overall, I view the Black-Throated Finch Management Plan (BTFMP) as having been compiled in line with and meeting the imposed EA conditions. The plan is responsive, contemporary and suitable for the required purpose. The BTFMP has been approved by the Department of Environment and Energy. I have not identified any reason which would justify DES to not endorse the BTFMP version 7b. It is better to have a single plan approved by both levels of government than separate versions of the same plan. The adaptive management approach provides for ongoing adaption and adoption of recognised areas for improvement."

Mr Dow said after another meeting with DES officials on Friday last week, Adani Mining still had not received clarity on timeframes or process for when the Queensland Government will finalise the plans.

"We are not going to be pig-headed about it and we are working through the latest round of requested changes for the Black-Throated Finch Management Plan as urgently as possible in order to move forward, however department officials have refused to commit to a timeframe to finalise the plan, even if we were to accept the State's new round of requests in full," he said.

"At some point, the Queensland Labor Government will need to show some courage and face regional Queenslanders with a decision on these outstanding management plans, ultimately deciding whether they will allow thousands of jobs to be delivered to the parts of our State that need it most.

"We have jumped all their past hurdles and we will jump these ones as well.

"Our courage and resolve is only strengthened with every hurdle put in our path.

"We have already invested \$3.3 billion into the Queensland economy. We are not going away and we will see this through for the benefit of Queensland and in particular for the people in regional Queensland."

ENDS