



**THE HON MARTIN FERGUSON AM MP**

**MINISTER FOR RESOURCES AND ENERGY  
MINISTER FOR TOURISM**

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PARLIAMENT HOUSE  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Mrs Julia Irwin MP  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Petitions  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Min ID: C09/1701

06 JUL 2009

Dear Mrs Irwin *JFW*,

Thank you for your letter of 9 June 2009 regarding the petition of supporters of the Caroon Coal Action Group submitted to the Standing Committee on Petitions.

As the Minister for Resources and Energy, I can assure you that the Commonwealth has an ongoing interest in ensuring mining and exploration are undertaken in an environmentally and socially responsible manner. However, while the Commonwealth has some powers under the Constitution that allow it to regulate certain aspects of mining activities, the states and territories are the main authorities for environmental management of most mines within their jurisdictions. Approval for exploration and mining leases and the regulation of mining operations is also a state and territory responsibility.

I also note that while exploration licences entitle companies to explore mineral and coal deposits, they do not permit mining or guarantee that mining will be permitted in the future. Strict conditions governing environmental and social impacts are attached to exploration licences, requiring any sites of disturbance to be restored and rehabilitated. The Commonwealth considers that before proposals with potential to impact on water resources are approved they should be properly assessed, including their potential impact on third parties.

I can assure you that the Commonwealth is aware of the importance of groundwater resources to Australia's agricultural production and concerns that potential mining developments may impact on groundwater resources. I work closely with my colleague the Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong, on these issues as she has portfolio responsibility for these matters. I understand that Senator Wong will also be responding to your letter in due course and I have provided a copy of this response to her.

Yours sincerely

*Martin Ferguson*