MEDIA RELEASE
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MCARTHUR RIVER
POLITICAL SCIENCE OR REAL SCIENCE?

Gerry Wood, Independent Member for Nelson, says the decision by the Environment Minister not to support the expansion of the McArthur River Mine on environmental grounds seems to have been based more on political science rather than science as she claimed.

Gerry says that from his reading of the Environmental Assessment Report and the Erskine Report as well as looking at the whole process he concludes that science has been given play school status in this debate.

Gerry says that if the government did not approve realigning the McArthur River then it should have said so up front when MIM gave its Notice of Intention back in 2003. This would have saved the company a lot of time and money preparing an Environmental Impact Statement. It would have also allowed them to make a decision early about whether the mine would be viable. By not being upfront, the government was giving quasi support to the idea that it was possible to realign the river.

As well, Gerry says, the EPA sought scientific opinion from a leading geomorphologist Professor Wayne Erskine but the EPA chose not to give that opinion to XSTRATA to comment on before the Minister made her decision.

Gerry says that Professor Erskine said that if XSTRATA followed his recommendations then the river could be realigned without any major impact to the environment. The question is, why was XSTRATA not given a chance to respond to the Erskine report?

Gerry also wonders why Professor Erskine was asked to comment only on the Draft EIS and not the Supplement to the Draft EIS which addressed a number of Professor Erskine’s concerns.

Gerry says that in the EPA’s Environmental Assessment Report there are consistent comments such as ‘not provided adequate information’, ‘a lack of supporting information’, ‘on the basis of the information provided’, ‘not been adequately investigated’, ‘the EPA has concern’, and ‘lack of sediment data’ which are proper considerations of an EPA. But Gerry says that instead of continuing the scientific process and asking the company to respond to these concerns, the Minister has not allowed the science to be fully tested and analysed but instead cut the process off at the pass.

Therefore one can only conclude that political science has got in the road of real science.

Cessi fere gallinarum sed surgo