

Submission to “A Draft Minerals Strategy for New Zealand to 2040”

from John Caygill (Privacy of natural persons)

Comments:

- The Foreword by the Hon. Shane Jones, Minister, veers from reasonable statements – “Our geology means we have a varied mineral environment” - to sheer hyperbole – “our vast mineral reserve” - and frank oxymoron – “remains largely unexplored” [how can we say it is vast if it is largely unexplored?].
- p.3, Export-led growth pathway: there is a spelling error: “Antinomy” should be “Antimony”.
- p.3, Export-led growth pathway: I disagree with scaling-up coking coal mining, which would mean opening-up new sites in the Buller coalfield such as the Buller Coal Project on the Denniston-Rochfort Plateau (Escarpment Phase 2) and Te Kuha (which has already been ruled-out by the Environment Court). High-rank coal is already available at other West Coast sites such as the Echo Mine, Roa, and Strongman opencast, if we need it locally. We don’t need to wreck the very special environment and landscapes of the Buller coalfield; far too much damage has been done up there already.
- p.5, New Mineral Opportunities: this shows REEs from the South Island West Coast mineral sands deposits – yet the TiGA project application for sand mining at Barrytown doesn’t include REEs (presumably from the monazite) as target minerals: why is this?
- p.2, “Production growth will not come at the expense of environmental outcomes”; also p.6, Pledge for mineral extraction to be environmentally sustainable: admirable statements, but they are directly in conflict with the aim to expand coking coal mining in the Buller (and probably with any prospect of phosphate mining on the Chatham Rise – see p.5). Large parts of the Denniston-Rochfort Plateau, and the proposed Te Kuha site (which has already been turned down for mining, and should stay that way) cannot be mined by open-cast methods without causing irremediable and permanent damage to an extremely rare, precious and fragile ecosystem and stunning landscapes, as acknowledged by the Commissioners in the initial consent hearings. We don’t need to expand mining in this region to sustain our own domestic industry – it would be all for export. The world doesn’t need our coking coal in order to continue making steel, good though the quality (of some of it) may be. The proposed destruction is in no way compensated by a hundred or so extra jobs in the Buller district for just 10 – 15 years and a few million dollars in royalties for the NZ economy.
- To claim, as Minister Jones has elsewhere, that the DoC estate is large and new mining developments within it would be a ‘mere blemish’ is like saying that there are thousands of art treasures for viewing in the public domain, so it wouldn’t matter if we spray-painted the Mona Lisa.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments on the proposed strategy.

John Caygill.