21 August 2026

Fast-Track Team
Fast-Track
New Zealand Government
P O Box 63-002
Wellington 6140

Dear Ministers

Letter of Support - Bathurst Resources Ltd
BULLER PLATEAUX CONTINUATION PROJECT (BPCP)

Mayors, Chairs and Iwi of the West Coast region wish to express our strong support for the Buller Plateaux Continuation Project and its progression through the Fast-Track Approvals process.

Mining has been part of the identity of the West Coast and a cornerstone of the economy since the mid-1800s. For generations, it has provided significant employment, sustained local businesses, contributed to community wellbeing and helped build the economic resilience of our region. The BPCP represents an important opportunity to support the long-term prosperity of the West Coast of New Zealand.

The economic significance of mining on the West Coast cannot be overstated. Mining contributes approximately $224 million annually to the West Coast economy, representing around 8% of regional GDP, making it one of the region's most important productive sectors.

Stockton Mine is one of the West Coast's largest employers and economic contributors. Stockton's operations support approximately 390 direct jobs and an additional 50 jobs outside the Buller area. Approximately $40 million was paid in salaries and wages in FY25, providing substantial direct support to households, local businesses and communities across the region.

Stockton's contribution is particularly significant in Buller, where the vast majority of its workforce lives. Approximately 96% of Stockton workers reside in the district, including around 84% in Westport and its immediate surrounds. Many own homes and have established families in the area, with strong connections to local schools, clubs, sports and community organisations.

The benefits extend well beyond Stockton's workforce. The operation supports more than 125 businesses across the West Coast, with annual expenditure of around $175 million flowing through local contractors, suppliers and other businesses. Stockton also supports community programmes, organisations and initiatives through sponsorship and charitable donations across the region.

Stockton is also nationally significant, producing approximately 80% of New Zealand's premium metallurgical coal exports and generating around $300 million in export earnings

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annually. This high-quality steelmaking coal remains an important component of global steel production and contributes valuable export revenue to New Zealand.

Recent independent economic analysis further highlights Stockton's importance to the region. Infometrics found that Stockton Mine contributed $108 million to the West Coast economy in 2025, accounting for 3.8% of regional GDP and 2.9% of regional employment.

The analysis found that closure would have significant economic and social impacts, particularly in Westport, where an estimated 289 resident jobs rely on Stockton and 11% of households would be affected by the loss of employment and income. If Stockton Mine were to close, Westport's population is estimated to fall by 168 people (2.8%), including a 9.1% reduction in the town's under-15 population, with implications for school rolls and the future workforce. In the communities surrounding Stockton, 103 resident jobs and 18% of households would be affected.

The BPCP would enable these economic and community benefits to continue by maintaining existing jobs, supporting future employment opportunities, sustaining local businesses and providing confidence for ongoing investment in the region. If approved, the BPCP would allow mining operations to continue for up to a further 25 years while utilising existing infrastructure and maintaining established supply chains and community partnerships.

Stockton also plays an important role in supporting the West Coast rail network. More than one million tonnes of Stockton coal is transported annually from Ngākawau to Lyttelton via the Midland Line, generating around $45 million a year in freight revenue for KiwiRail. This substantial freight task contributes to the viability of a rail corridor that also carries dairy and other freight and is used by the world-famous TranzAlpine passenger service.

The loss of this freight could therefore have implications well beyond Stockton itself. A significant reduction in rail volumes could affect the long-term viability and level of service of the Midland Line, putting other freight services and the TranzAlpine at risk. Any resulting impact on the TranzAlpine would be a significant blow to West Coast tourism, while reduced rail activity could put KiwiRail jobs at risk. If reduced rail capacity resulted in other freight shifting to road, this would also increase heavy vehicle movements, adding pressure to the region's highways and increasing transport emissions.

Continued mining also enables ongoing investment in the management and rehabilitation of an area carrying the legacy of more than a century of mining. Since taking over Stockton, Bathurst has undertaken significant environmental management and progressive rehabilitation, including work to address historic land disturbance and the ongoing treatment of acid mine drainage from both current and historic mining areas. The BPCP would enable this work to continue alongside mining operations, progressively rehabilitating disturbed land, managing water quality and working towards a safe and sustainable post-mining landscape.

The West Coast understands the importance of balancing economic development with environmental stewardship. Our support is conditional on the project being subject to robust statutory assessment, appropriate environmental management, meaningful Iwi engagement, effective rehabilitation and monitoring, and full compliance with any consent conditions imposed. We support a science-based process that carefully considers environmental effects while recognising the significant social and economic benefits that responsible resource development can bring to our communities.

The Buller Plateaux Continuation Project aligns with the West Coast's long history of resource development and offers an opportunity to maintain skilled employment, strengthen regional economic resilience, contribute export earnings to New Zealand and provide greater certainty for workers, families, businesses and future generations.

For these reasons, we strongly support the Buller Plateaux Continuation Project and its advancement through the relevant statutory approval processes, subject to the matters identified above being appropriately assessed, managed and conditioned.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

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Chair - Development West Coast

[redacted]

Colin Smith
Chair - West Coast Regional Council

[redacted]

Chris Russell
Mayor - Buller District

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