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30 April, 1998

**TO:** Ms Andrea Coulter **FAX No:** 03 9653 2302  
**FROM:** Dr Bob Durie  
**SUBJECT:** Industry Commission draft report on the Australian Black Coal Industry

Dear Ms Coulter,

Thank you for your quick response for a copy of the Draft Report (2 volumes) on the Australian Coal Industry.

This report makes interesting reading, Although the bulk of it deals with matters mostly outside those areas where I have relevant detailed knowledge, there is a statement in Volume 2, Section B on a technical matter concerning the classification of coals which is incorrect.

In Volume 2, Section B.4.1 on page B11, there is a lead in statement in the first paragraph which reads:

“The coal standard adopted by the United Nations is based on a scheme developed by the American Standards Association and the American Society for Testing Materials (ASTM).”

**This statement is not correct**. There has been a long saga of activity in the United Nations through the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), in efforts to develop a rational, practical classification of coals which is applicable to all coals world wide. I had a direct involvement in this at the technical level, for a number of years. There were complications, both non technical and technical, which led to unsatisfactory outcomes which are **not** based on the ASTM classification. As a consequence of these activities in the ECE and the outcomes, the International Standards Organisation (ISO) decided that it needed to take action to develop its own system for the classification of coals. As a consequence of my involvement in the ECE activities, both as the technical representative for Australia and the ISO representative at the meetings of the ECE working group on coal classification, I am convener for the ISO working group which is grappling with the challenge of developing a useful, ie simple, classification of coals that is **applicable to all coals worldwide**.

On the latter point it is specifically stated in the ASTM system for the classification of coals by rank (geochemical maturity) that it is applicable only to coals that consist principally of the petrographic component vitrinite. Despite this caution it is being incorrectly used to classify many Australian coals that are not vitrinite rich.

To get the record right I suggest that the first paragraph in Section B.4.1 be deleted and that the following paragraph be rephrased.

I would be happy to discuss the matter further with the officer responsible for drafting this section of the report.

R A Durie  
Consultant  
(Coal, Energy and Environment)