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## **\$35 million chemical manufacturing plant to boost investment, jobs in Lower Hunter**

The NSW Department of Planning has approved a \$35 million chemical manufacturing facility in Cessnock, supporting some 40 new jobs.

The facility will be built on the site of the Orica Technology Centre at Richmond Vale and will support the manufacturing of ammonium nitrate emulsion (ANE), which is primarily used as an explosives precursor in the mining industry.

The centre currently employs about 220 people, and the new facility would add 30 jobs during construction and a further 10 full-time equivalent jobs during operation.

The Department's Deputy Director-General Richard Pearson said Orica would be permitted to manufacture up to 250,000 tonnes of ANE per annum, which would help provide ongoing certainty to the mining industry locally and throughout south-east Australia.

"ANE is a key ingredient of many of the explosives that are used in both open-cut and underground mining as well as the quarry and construction industries, and this facility is expected to meet the demand for ANE until 2023," Mr Pearson said.

"This new facility will not only attract significant new investment to the Hunter Region, it will also provide an essential product for both the mining and other industries in NSW."

The Department approved the project following a detailed assessment which included consideration of key issues such as hazards and risk, road safety, traffic noise and ecology.

The Department's assessment found that all potential impacts could be appropriately managed and that, as such, the proposal was in the public interest.

While ANE is used as an explosives precursor, it is not itself explosive until 'sensitised' by mixing with other chemicals in blast holes at the mine or quarry site.

As such, the facility can be safely constructed and operated in its proposed location, which is 1.8 kilometres from the nearest residence.

Nonetheless, a total of 44 conditions were also imposed as part of the Department's approval to ensure environmental and amenity protection as well as community safety. These include:

- the requirement to undertake a construction safety study before construction can commence and a hazard audit after one year of operation;
- preparation and implementation of a biodiversity offset strategy and vegetation management plan, which will conserve 31.7 hectares of native vegetation;
- conservation of the offset area in perpetuity; and
- implementation of a number of traffic management measures at the intersection of Echidna Drive (the site's entry) with George Booth Drive.

The technology centre has been operating since 1991 as an explosives research facility and quarry services depot.

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