



Hon Tony Kelly MLC  
Minister for Planning  
Minister for Infrastructure  
Minister for Lands  
Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council  
Leader of the House in the Legislative Council

## MEDIA RELEASE

23 February, 2010

### **PUBLIC HEARINGS INTO BICKHAM COAL PLANS**

Residents are encouraged to attend public hearings next month and have their say on plans by Bickham Coal to develop a new open cut mine.

Minister for Planning, Tony Kelly, said the new mine is proposed near the Pages River, 15 kilometres south of Murrurundi.

“It would be capable of extracting up to 36 million tonnes of coal over a 25 year period at a rate of two million tonnes a year,” the Minister said.

The hearings would be held by the Planning Assessment Commission (PAC) on Wednesday 17 and Thursday 18 March, 2010, at the Upper Hunter Shire Council Chambers, 135 Liverpool Street, Scone.

Mr Kelly said the PAC will have an important role advising him on the water-related risks and other aspects of the Bickham Coal Project.

“It is therefore important people have their say so I have asked the PAC to hold public hearings,” the Minister said.

The terms of reference the PAC are to advise on:

- Water-related risks;
- Adequacy of the Water Resource Assessment for the project and associated draft life-of-mine Water Management Plan;
- Whether the water-related risks of the project can be suitably managed to ensure an acceptable level of environmental performance, having regard to the relevant recommendations in the *Strategic Assessment of Coal Mining Potential in the Upper Hunter Valley*;
- Other significant issues raised about the project in public submissions;
- Whether the project should be allowed to proceed to a full merit assessment under Part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act and, if so any specific requirements that should be included in the Director-General’s requirements for the environmental assessment of the project as a whole.

The PAC panel for this project will comprise former Environment Protection Authority Director-General, Dr Neil Shepherd (Chair), and water experts Dr Lloyd Townley and Dr Lindsay Gilbert.

The PAC has access to all submissions made to the Department of Planning concerning the Water Resource Assessment and the draft Water Management Plan.

People who want to speak at the hearing or have new material to be considered should contact the PAC secretariat on 9383 2104 before Friday, 12 March, 2010.

The PAC’s independent report will be made to the Minister by April 30, 2010.

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