Narrabri mine expansion injects $300 million and 175 new jobs into regional economy

A $295 million expansion of the Narrabri Coal Project will deliver a significant investment in the Narrabri region and create almost 100 new ongoing local jobs.

Planning Minister Tony Kelly said a further 75 construction jobs would also be created as a result of the approval which will allow extraction of up 8 million tonnes of coal per year for 21 years at the underground mine located between Tarrawan and Baan Baa.

The mine’s total workforce is likely to surge to more than 200 workers.

“The Narrabri Coal operation already delivers a hugely important stimulus to the local economy and this expansion is set to expand those benefits significantly,” Mr Kelly said.

“Over its lifetime, the mine will extract around $17 billion worth of coal and contribute up to $36 million a year in wages.

“This represents money going straight into the pockets of local workers and flowing into the broader regional economy.

“As part of the approval, the mine has also agreed to provide $1.5 million to Narrabri Shire Council for the construction of a swimming complex in Narrabri as part of a Community Enhancement Program.

“All in all, this mine expansion represents a significant boost to the local community.”

The extraction of coal under the approved expansion will be undertaken through longwall mining techniques, with the extracted coal to be transported by rail to the Port of Newcastle.

The approval was granted by the NSW Department of Planning following a thorough assessment of issues such as potential subsidence impacts, groundwater and surface water management, Aboriginal cultural heritage and biodiversity impacts.

Mr Kelly said that a number of leading experts had reviewed the proposal, particularly in relation to subsidence, groundwater and surface water, and the Department’s assessment found that any potential impacts could be appropriately managed.

“Importantly, the assessment found that the mine site is located in an area that is unlikely to be significantly impacted by subsidence,” Mr Kelly said.

“The project will not undermine any privately-owned residences or major public infrastructure such as highways, rail lines or electricity lines.

“Nor does the site contain any permanently flowing streams.

“As such, the project’s assessment found that no substantial impacts are expected on local groundwater and that impacts on other assets can be adequately mitigated.

“The proponent will be required to provide a biodiversity offset strategy which maintains or improves conservation values by permanently protecting high conservation land in perpetuity.
“This strategy will be prepared with the input of the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water and is likely to include land adjacent to the Mount Kaputar National Park.

“A revised Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management Plan will also need to be prepared in consultation with the local Aboriginal community, and a detailed Aboriginal heritage survey completed prior to any surface disturbance.”

The approval imposes 76 strict conditions, including:

- the requirement to implement detailed subsidence monitoring programs in order to validate subsidence predictions, thereby informing ongoing subsidence management;
- real-time monitoring of noise impacts;
- implementation of a revised air quality monitoring program;
- ongoing operation of a Community Consultative Committee; and
- the requirement to publicly report on environmental management plans and monitoring results.

Mr Kelly said that the NSW Ministerial Cabinet Sub-Committee into mining will continue to meet and develop a statewide approach to coal mining by the end of the year.

“This experienced, senior and balanced team has been charged with providing a co-ordinated strategy from government on coal mining and greater certainty to both the mining industry and local communities across NSW,” Mr Kelly said.