

Tuesday, 30 March 2010

Public feedback sought on Wyong coal mine proposal

The NSW Department of Planning is calling for community feedback on the Wallarah Coal 2 Project, which will tomorrow be placed on public exhibition for an extended period of 60 days.

The proponent, Wyong Areas Coal Joint Venture, is seeking project approval for:

- extracting up to 5 million tonnes of coal a year from underground workings for a period of up to 28 years using longwall mining methods;
- constructing and operating a range of associated infrastructure including a rail spur, coal stockpiles, ventilation shafts and a gas drainage system;
- transporting coal from the mine by rail; and
- rehabilitating the site.

The Department's Deputy Director-General of Development Assessment, Richard Pearson, said the proponent's environmental assessment had been deemed adequate for exhibition following a number of revisions to ensure it addressed each of the Department's environmental assessment requirements.

"The public exhibition of the Wallarah 2 Coal Project represents the next step in what will be one of the most extensive and rigorous coal mining assessments in Australia," Mr Pearson said.

"The requirements for environmental assessment were prepared after considering a range of recommendations from the local community, who provided feedback in early 2009 on a broader strategic inquiry into potential coal mining impacts in the Wyong area.

"This inquiry found that there are no significant reasons why coal mining should not be permitted in the Wyong area, subject to mining proposals being assessed on their merits.

"In relation to the Wallarah 2 Coal Project, the inquiry specifically recommended that the project could be assessed under the major projects assessment system, which is the process that is now underway.

"With the project on public exhibition, relevant Government agencies, councils, adjacent landowners and the community – including all those who lodged submissions in response to the independent inquiry – have been notified of the exhibition and invited to comment.

"The exhibition period has been doubled to 60 days, extending from Wednesday 31 March until Wednesday 2 June 2010, to give the community ample opportunity to provide feedback on this proposal."

As part of the assessment process, the proposal will also be subject to independent review, including public hearings, conducted by the Planning Assessment Commission (PAC).

“An independent water expert will also review the adequacy of the surface and groundwater data in the sub-catchments affected by the proposal, and this will be subject to an international peer review.”

The Environmental Assessment (EA) for the project is publicly available at:

- Department of Planning, Information Centre, 23-33 Bridge Street, Sydney;
- Wyong Shire Council, Civic Centre, 16 Hely Street, Wyong; or
- Nature Conservation Council, Level 2, 301 Kent Street, Sydney.

The environmental assessment and other relevant proposal documents are also available online by visiting the Department’s website and searching for the project in the Major Projects Register at <http://majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au>.

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