GOVERNMENT PROHIBITS OPEN-CUT MINING ON BICKHAM SITE

The NSW Government has acted swiftly to prohibit open-cut mining on the Bickham Coal Project site near Murrurundi in the State’s Upper Hunter.

Minister for Planning, Tony Kelly, said the State Environmental Planning Policy (Mining, Petroleum Production and Extractive Industries) 2007 has been amended to reflect the prohibition.

“This prohibition provides the community with certainty that an open-cut mining proposal such as the Bickham Coal Project will not be entertained on this site,” the Minister said.

The amendment follows the Premier’s announcement earlier this month that the Bickham Coal Project proposal would not be supported and open-cut mining would be prohibited on the site.

The mining proposal itself, specifically the proponent’s water study, was subject to lengthy independent review by the Planning Assessment Commission (PAC).

The PAC review put the proposal under the microscope, receiving submissions from stakeholders, conducting public hearings and meeting with experts, Government agencies, local government and industry groups.

The PAC concluded, given the potential water-related risks, the proposal should not proceed to merit assessment.

It also concluded the introduction of open-cut mining to the Upper Hunter could have adverse impacts on the region’s well-established and valuable thoroughbred industry.”

Member for the Hunter, Jodi McKay, welcomed the announcement.

“The Government has acted decisively to deliver certainty, not only to the community but local industry, that this proposal will not proceed,” Ms McKay said.

Mr Kelly also announced today a streamlined approval process for 14 air quality monitoring stations to help roll out the Government’s Upper Hunter Air Quality Monitoring Network.

“An amendment to the State planning policy relating to infrastructure will allow monitoring stations proposed by a public authority to proceed as exempt development in rural zones,” the Minister said.

“In other words, a public authority can construct monitoring stations on rural land without further approval, provided the development would have minimal environmental impact and is not located in an area of critical habitat or wilderness area.

“On any other land, monitoring stations can be self assessed by the public authority, after taking into consideration any potential environmental impacts.

“The amendment will simplify the planning approval process for these facilities which, once up and running, will provide valuable information on air quality in Upper Hunter mining areas and populated centres.”