13 September, 2010

CHARBON COAL MINE EXPANSION APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS

The independent Planning Assessment Commission (PAC) has approved an expansion of Charbon Colliery near Mudgee.

NSW Minister for Planning, Tony Kelly, said the expansion will ensure continued employment for 138 people.

“The approval involves extracting up to 5.2 million tonnes of additional coal from five small, new open cut pits and a small new underground mine which will support extraction of a total of 1.5 million tonnes of coal a year,” the Minister said.

“Under its existing development consents, Charbon Coal is allowed to extract up to 1.3 million tonnes of coal a year which is processed on-site then railed to domestic and export markets.

Member for Bathurst, Gerard Martin, welcomed the announcement.

“This expansion will ensure continued employment for 138 workers at the mine and provide a boost to the operations of nearby lime and cement works which employ around 130 people,” Mr Martin said.

A total of 81 conditions have been imposed including:
- Setting noise limits as well as requiring Charbon to reduce mining operations under certain weather conditions (such as when winds blow towards nearby residences);
- Allowing impacted residences to request noise audits, mitigation works and acquisition, if required;
- Requiring the company to monitor and suppress dust impacts and reduce operations if air quality limits are breached;
- Ensuring 171 hectares of land is revegetated and protected and the 46 hectare open cut mine site is rehabilitated and revegetated to compensate for land clearing;
- Ensuring Charbon pays appropriate road maintenance fees to the Mid-Western Regional Council, linked to the amount of road haulage;
- Requiring Charbon to seal sections of Charbon Road before using it to transport coal to the Kandos cement works and contribute $210,000 to the upgrade of Carwell Creek Bridge within 30 days of the commencement of bridge upgrade works by Council; and
- Requirement for Charbon to undertake a safety audit of public roads between the mine and the Castlereagh Highway and prepare an action plan for implementation of any recommendations.

The proposal was determined by the Planning Assessment Commission (PAC) because Charbon made reportable political donations. The proposal was assessed on behalf of the PAC by the Department of Planning.

The PAC panel comprised:
- Gabrielle Kibble, former Department of Planning Director-General;
- Garry Payne, former Department of Local Government Director-General; and
- Donna Campbell, former Director of Legal Services at the Environmental Protection Authority with 25 years of government experience in environmental planning law.