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MEDIA RELEASE

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MOUNT ARTHUR EXPANSION TO DELIVER HUNDREDS OF NEW JOBS

The NSW Government has approved a \$785 million expansion of the Mount Arthur coal mining complex near Muswellbrook that will create hundreds of new jobs.

The Government's approval will also consolidate and modernise the complex's existing planning consents and generate hundreds of millions of dollars of flow on benefits into the Hunter economy.

As a result of the approval, the operation's rate of extraction will increase from 28 to 36 million tonnes per year for a period of 12 years, with the vast majority of the coal transported from the complex by rail and none by road.

Minister for Planning, Tony Kelly, said the proposal presented the opportunity to create a consolidated and modern approval regime for the mining complex which consists of four separate mining areas that have, to date, been operating under separate consents.

"This is a very important approval for a number of reasons," Mr Kelly said.

"The expansion is expected to boost employment at the complex by 1,600 from 960 to 2,600 workers at peak production

"Not only does it represent a significant investment in the Upper Hunter and create new jobs, it also delivers a host of environmental benefits.

"Mount Arthur Coal will be required to set aside and/or rehabilitate almost 1,500 hectares of land for conservation purposes to compensate for vegetation losses incurred as a result of the expansion.

"The company will also be required to contribute around \$13 million towards the upgrade of Thomas Mitchell Drive and other community projects."

The approved project will allow for the:

- Expansion of open cut mining into areas adjacent to existing pits;
- Upgrading of existing surface infrastructure including construction of a new coal loader;
- Relocation of a section of Edderton Road; and
- Progressive rehabilitation of the site.

A total of 86 conditions have been imposed including:

- Acquisition of any property if dust or noise emissions significantly exceed the applicable criteria and if requested by the landowner;
- Complying with blast criteria at all times and restrict the hours and frequency of blasting;
- Restriction of mining within 150 metres of the Hunter River and Saddlers Creek alluvials unless appropriate groundwater management safeguards, prepared in consultation with the NSW Office of Water, are in place;
- Providing compensatory water supplies to a landowner whose supplies are affected by the project;
- Extending the complex's existing rehabilitation strategy and confirm the additional environmental offset area in consultation with the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water; and
- Upgrading of the intersections of Thomas Mitchell Drive with New England Highway and Denman Road.

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