

Friday, 30 March 2012

Feedback sought on proposed coal mine expansion in central-western NSW

The proposed \$123 million expansion and consolidation of two open-cut and high wall coal mines, near Cullen Bullen in central-western NSW, will be placed on public exhibition within the next fortnight by the NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure

The proponent, Coalpac Pty Ltd, is seeking planning approval for the Coalpac Consolidation project, located approximately 25 kilometres north-west of Lithgow.

The department issued Director-General's requirements in December 2010, outlining issues the proponent needed to address in its environmental assessment.

Deputy Director-General Richard Pearson said the company's first environmental assessment, submitted in July 2011, did not adequately address the project's potential impacts on biodiversity, natural, historic and Aboriginal cultural heritage, noise, air quality and groundwater.

"The proponent must ensure the environmental assessment contains adequate information to enable the public to comment on the proposal, before the department will allow it to be exhibited. After liaising with the department on a number of issues, the proponent submitted a revised EA in mid January which has now been deemed adequate," Mr Pearson said.

"After the Easter public holidays, we will be giving the community an extended eight-week period in which to have their say, given the significant scale of the proposal, the strong public interest in the proposal and the overlap with the April school holidays."

The environmental assessment will be on public exhibition from **Tuesday 10 April 2012** until **Friday 1 June 2012**.

The proposal includes:

- Consolidating development consents and project approvals at both the Invincible and Cullen Valley coal mines so that one approval regulates mining across both sites;
- Expanding open cut and high wall mining areas, to extract an additional 108 million tonnes of coal;
- Upgrading and building associated infrastructure to process 3.5 million tonnes of coal per annum and transport coal off the site by road and rail;
- Producing up to 640,000 tonnes of sand products each year;
- Clearing approximately 960 hectares of vegetation, primarily within Ben Bullen State Forest; and
- Rehabilitating the site.

The proposal includes a biodiversity offset strategy, which would potentially allocate more than 1,755 hectares of land as biodiversity offsets.

Coalpac is proposing to employ up to 120 operational staff and additional contractors for the 21-year life of the project.

Submissions received during the public exhibition period, along with the proponent's response to submissions document, will be made available on the department's website. The submissions and proponent's response will be carefully considered as part of the department's assessment of the project. The department will then make a recommendation to the Planning Assessment Commission, which will determine the application.

The project will also require Commonwealth approval under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

All relevant project documents will be publicly available on the department's website at <http://majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au>, following the links to the 'On Exhibition' page.

From Tuesday 10 April, the environmental assessment for the project will be available to view during business hours at:

- **Department of Planning and Infrastructure** – Information Centre, 23-33 Bridge Street, Sydney;
- **Lithgow City Council** – 180 Mort Street, Lithgow CBD;
- **Lithgow Council Library Portland Branch** – Williwa Street, Portland; and
- **Nature Conservation Council** – Level 2, 5 Wilson Street, Newtown.

Submissions can be:

- Lodged online at www.planning.nsw.gov.au;
- Emailed to plan_comment@planning.nsw.gov.au;
- Faxed to (02) 9228 6466; or
- Posted to Mining and Industry Projects, Department of Planning and Infrastructure, GPO Box 39, SYDNEY NSW 2001.

Media contact: Laurel-Lee Roderick, (02) 9228 6128 or 0429 153 139

NOTE: The Department of Planning and Infrastructure is issuing this media release to encourage the community to take part in the planning process. However, it is the role of the proponent (either through its documents published on our website or otherwise) to provide further specific details about the proposal.