Department refers Moolarben recommendation for independent decision

The independent Planning Assessment Commission (PAC) has been requested to review a proposal to develop Stage 2 of the Moolarben Coal Project and to give the community a further opportunity to have their say.

Planning and Infrastructure Minister Brad Hazzard referred the project to the PAC for independent review following a comprehensive assessment by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, which found that the project should be approved with conditions.

The independent PAC will hold public hearings which will provide the community with an opportunity to give feedback on the project and the department’s preliminary assessment report and recommendations.

The PAC will then form an independent view after taking into consideration any additional submissions and then provide this review to the department.

Following the department’s consideration of the PAC’s review, the PAC will then make the final decision on the proposal.

The department’s preliminary assessment concluded that the project was a logical extension to the Moolarben Mine’s Stage One operation and should be approved given the significant predicted local, regional and State economic benefits, including additional jobs and investment.

It further found the potential impacts could be managed subject to strict conditions to help safeguard the mine’s environmental performance and to address community concerns around water, traffic and noise.

The conditions recommended in the department’s assessment include:

- Implementation of a water management system to ensure zero discharge of contaminated water from the site and comprehensive water monitoring
- Noise mitigation to be made available to properties that would be moderately impacted
- $1.5 million in community enhancement works
- Implementation of the Ulan Road strategy to undertake agreed necessary road improvements
- The offset and rehabilitation of more than 5,500 hectares of native vegetation, with more than 1,100 hectares to be permanently conserved and protected
- Conservation in perpetuity protection of 94 Aboriginal heritage sites (including 10 highly significant sites) within four conservation areas surrounding the site.

Stage One of the Moolarben mine began operating in 2010.
The application for Stage Two was initially put on exhibition in 2009. At the request of the department, Moolarben Coal Mines made a number of significant changes to the project to reduce environmental impacts. These changes were exhibited again in 2012.

More information can be found at www.majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au

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