Department approves extension to Cowal Gold Mine

The NSW Department of Planning and Environment has granted a five-year extension to the Cowal Gold Mine near West Wyalong, securing ongoing employment for the mine’s 385 staff members.

The extension involves increasing the area and depth of the existing open-cut pit at the mine, while continuing the existing maximum production limit for the next five years.

Department Executive Director Chris Wilson said the extension will allow Barrick Limited to recover an additional 700,000 ounces of gold and provide a significant boost to the regional and state economies.

Mr Wilson said the Department has imposed a number of stringent conditions on the mine to ensure the local community and environment are adequately protected.

These conditions include a requirement to comply with strict noise and air quality criteria, a 230 hectare extension to the biodiversity offsets for the mine, and a range of additional environmental management measures that reflect contemporary standards for large-scale mines in NSW.

The Cowal Gold Mine is a major employer in the region and the three local councils (Bland, Forbes and Lachlan) strongly supported the extension.

Of the 81 public submissions received during the public exhibition of the proposal in late 2013, 72 were in favour, primarily on the grounds of employment opportunities and economic benefits.

Mr Wilson said he understood the community had raised concerns about the length of the assessment process, but said it was important for the Department to carefully consider all of the potential impacts of the project before making its final determination.

Further information on the mine extension can be found at: http://majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au/

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