Thursday, 15 May 2014

Public hearings planned for PAC reviews of mining projects

Community members will have an opportunity to address the independent Planning Assessment Commission (PAC) about two coal mining projects being assessed by the NSW Government.

The Department of Planning & Environment has forwarded its preliminary assessments of the Bulga Optimisation Project and Watermark Coal Project to the PAC for review.

The department’s preliminary assessments found both projects should be approved, with strict conditions put in place to minimise potential impacts on biodiversity, water resources and local communities.

Under the Minister’s terms of reference for the PAC reviews, the Commission will hold public hearings – ensuring that the community has another opportunity to raise any concerns they may have, following public exhibitions of the projects in early 2013.

Members of the public can register with the PAC to make a presentation during the public hearings and any issues raised will be considered by the Commission as part of its review of the merits of each project.

Following the two reviews the Commission will report back to the Department on its findings and recommendations, with this information helping the Department finalise its assessments. After receiving the Department’s final assessments, the Planning Assessment Commission will determine each proposal.

The department’s preliminary assessments and further information on the projects is available at: www.majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au.

Further information about the PAC review will be made available at: www.pac.nsw.gov.au.

Bulga Optimisation Project background:

Bulga Coal Management Pty Ltd, a subsidiary of Glencore Coal Limited, proposes to expand and continue the Bulga open cut mining operations to access 205 million tonnes of coal from seams within and beneath the existing open cut mine until 2035.

The mine is the southernmost mining operation in the Upper Hunter coal fields and has been operating since 1982.

Economic benefits expected from the project include $565 million in royalties for the NSW Government, continued employment for the 700 people that currently work at the open cut mine and an additional 300 jobs during the construction phase.
**Watermark Coal Project background:**

Shenhua Watermark Coal Pty Limited is proposing to develop the Watermark Coal Project, a new open cut coal mine located 3km west of the village of Breeza and 25 kilometres south-east of Gunnedah on the Liverpool Plains.

Under the proposal, coal would be extracted at up to 10 million tonnes of coal a year over 30 years, recovering a coal reserve of about 268 million tonnes.

The project has a capital investment value of $850 million, and would generate about 600 jobs during the 18 month construction period and 600 jobs during operations.

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