Thursday, 16 April 2015

**Conservation land bank concept approved**

A concept by Illawarra Coal to allow a large bank of conservation land to be protected to make up for impacts of mining in the future has been approved by the Department of Planning and Environment.

“The approvals for the Dendrobium and Bulli Seam coal mines include conditions requiring conservation land to be set aside to compensate for any impacts that occur as the mines progress,” a Department spokesperson said.

“We’ve now ticked off on a different approach, which avoids piecemeal conservation and has the potential to see a large area set aside for environmental protection, before any land has been affected by mining.

“This is a great outcome for the Illawarra environment and means the community can have greater certainty that there is land already set aside for protection before a single tree is disturbed.

“The mining company can then use the already protected land as a conservation bank to draw on to compensate for the effects of mining in the future.

“Importantly, before the Department accepts any proposal by the mining company about exactly which land will be a part of this bank, we will ensure it is the right land which properly makes up for any affected areas.”

The spokesperson said protecting environmentally sensitive land is an important part of striking a balance between the impacts and benefits of mining to the Illawarra.

“Illawarra Coal employs around 2000 people across these two projects, so their importance to local working families is undeniable,” the spokesperson said.

“The Department has an important role to play in ensuring the impacts of mining are minimised.

“The strict environmental conditions we apply to these projects and enforce throughout their life are crucial to achieving the right balance.”

To view the Department’s assessment of the approved proposal, visit www.majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au.

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