



Presentation by Brian Nicholls, Mine Manager, Springvale Mine

Planning Assessment Commission Meeting
Springvale Water Treatment Project, Western Coal Services Project MOD 1
& Springvale Mine Extension Project MOD 2
Wednesday 17th May 2017
Civic Ballroom, George Coates Avenue, Lithgow

I would like to thank the Commission for providing me the opportunity to speak at today's Public Meeting.

My name is Brian Nicholls. I am the Mine Manager at Springvale Mine.

Springvale Mine is an established underground coal mine. It has a long history in the area with well established community relationships.

The mine has provided employment and support to the local community as well as supplying coal to the local power stations for more than 20 years.

Springvale currently operates under State Significant Development Consent SSD 5594. The consent allows Springvale to carry out mining operations until 31st December 2028.

When securing SSD 5594, Centennial Coal committed to significantly improving the quality of water discharged and this commitment was incorporated into the consent conditions.

Springvale, in collaboration with Energy Australia, is proposing to develop a mine water transfer and treatment project which would see the transfer mine water from both the Springvale and Angus Place Mines to Mount Piper Power Station. The project is known as the Springvale Water Treatment Project.

The Springvale Water Treatment Project will go beyond the water quality compliance condition as required by the consent ensuring no untreated water is discharged.

The project involves the installation of:

- A transfer pipeline,
- A desalination plant to treat the water for use in the power station cooling towers, and
- A system to transfer any excess treated water to Thompson Creek Reservoir

The project removes the need to discharge mine water to the drinking water catchment and provides a beneficial re-use of the mine water in the operation of the cooling towers at Mount Piper.

There are two modifications associated with this project:

- i) To defer salinity reduction targets in the Springvale Mine consent until the Water Treatment Project is completed, and
- ii) For the Western Coal Services Site to receive a small amount of residual waste from the treatment of mine water.

The two modifications are fundamentally interrelated and support the Springvale Water Treatment Project.

Approval of the proposed modifications is vital to the continued operation of Springvale Mine.

Furthermore, it will result in a positive impact in the continuation of direct and indirect employment as well as providing certainty of employment for the existing employees.

The effects of the direct and indirect wages will further benefit the local community with the majority of Springvale's workforce living in the Lithgow and the surrounding areas.

The recent media reports of a major energy crisis looming in Australia illustrate the criticality of a secure and sustainable supply of energy.

Mount Piper Power Station is reliant on Springvale as its sole supplier of fuel. Mount Piper supplies approximately 15% of New South Wales electricity.

In 2015 the mine had a 'stand down' as a consequence of a delay in the approval process.

Late last year a survey of our employees was conducted so as to gain a better understanding of the impact this 'stand down' had on our workforce, their families and our local community.

A report of the survey results has recently been finalised. From the responses there is a clear message of how important Springvale Mine is to the Lithgow community and the remaining uncertainties about the future of mining in the area.

Our people live locally and are actively engaged in the local community and when Springvale is impacted and jobs are threatened, this impact flows through to the local economy and the broader community.

The survey clearly illustrated the anxieties and concerns our employees have for not only their futures, but also for the future of their families and for Lithgow itself.

It is only to be expected for people to seek stability and security of long term employment. When there are uncertainties and doubts to the continuance of employment, people start to look and think about relocating from the area to secure other long term employment.

Through my own experiences I can relate to and understand their concerns.

Prior to concluding my presentation this morning I would like to offer a personal insight and draw upon some potential similarities.

My family and I emigrated to Australia in 2006 because of the uncertainty that existed in the British coal industry. With my personal values and morals I felt that I had no other option but to relocate my family overseas so I could continue to provide a future for them.

Sadly my fears for the future of the British mining industry have been realised with the closure of Kellingley Colliery in December 2015, effectively marking the end of deep mining in the United Kingdom.

I can assure you that emigrating is no small undertaking and is not a decision that one takes lightly. The upheaval of moving your family away from loved ones, friends and all they know is traumatic and very emotional. My memories of the day we left and the impact on our family, even after 11 years are still raw and will no doubt stay with me forever.

Needless to say it takes a long time to come to terms with a decision of such magnitude. If my wife was stood here today I would suggest that she would tell you that she still struggles with the notion that her parents who are both in their seventies are so far away, in particular when there are health issues and illness.

When it comes to special occasions such as birthdays, anniversaries and Christmas, no matter how much you try to compensate, they are just not the same.

I grew up in Castleford, a thriving, busy and bustling industrial town in the heart of the West Yorkshire Coalfield. There were several mines surrounding the township which offered employment to a significant percentage of the local population either directly in the mines or in the supply of manufacturing, engineering and in other community services. I began my working life in these mines.

On a recent trip back home to visit family and friends, I saw first hand the results and the devastating impact on a community following the mine closure program.

We visited Castleford on a Saturday afternoon and were dismayed to see the effects of what happens when the wrong policies are adopted.

The town was deserted. It was 'dead'. Many of the shops had very few customers. There were several premises that were vacant and unoccupied. It was very different to how I remembered Castleford.

Quite frankly I was shocked and disappointed. There was nothing left in the town.

Many of the businesses (Nestle, Hickson and Welch, Ferrybridge Power Station, RHP to name but a few) had either closed their operations or relocated.

It was a ghost town.

My message to you today is to urge you not to make the same mistakes that others have made.

Centennial Coal is vital to the Lithgow community.

We are proud to be a member of this community.

We are a large employer that makes a significant contribution toward the local economy.

We do not take for granted the huge level of support this community gives us.

Lithgow is unique.

Where else would mining enjoy such huge support?

Springvale enjoys huge support from this community and we know that it will continue to underpin the areas local economy whilst also contributing to keeping the lights on in NSW.

Thank you once again for allowing me to speak at this meeting today.

Brian Nicholls
Mine Manager
Springvale Mine