

NSW Planning Assessment Commission Determination Wallarah 2 underground coal mine (SSD 4974)

16 January 2018

The Planning Assessment Commission has granted consent to the Wallarah 2 underground coal mine in the Central Coast, subject to conditions. The decision follows the public meeting in Wyong on 3 November 2017.

The Commission has determined the proposal is in the public interest. The creation of 300 operational jobs, and 450 construction jobs along with the investment in the local area would have significant local benefits for the community, provide investment in the Central Coast and contribute to the growth of the region. The mine would also generate royalties for the State and the people of NSW while providing a source of high quality thermal coal during the global transition to a decarbonised economy.

Impacts and potential risks can be appropriately managed through the framework of rigorous controls and requirements in place to manage, mitigate, minimise, compensate and offset those impacts.

In considering the suitability of the site for underground mining the Commission acknowledged its location under a sensitive drinking water catchment and the strategic context of a growing population, an uncertain future global coal market, along with the need to curb carbon emissions and reliance on coal fired power stations.

The Commission heard and acknowledged strong calls for it to take a precautionary approach given the potential for impacts to the Central Coast's drinking water supply catchment. The issue has been assessed in detail. Impacts were assessed to be small and acceptable, with no net impact on the availability of water for the Central Coast drinking water supply catchment during the life of the mine. The framework of conditions requires formal reviews of the subsidence predictions and impacts, adaptive management, compensatory water supply and ultimately include requirements for mining to cease if this is deemed necessary. The Commission has found that these extensive conditions will provide a precautionary approach to protecting the drinking water supply catchment.

The Commission has noted the impacts of subsidence on flood levels and emergency evacuation routes and the requirements for works to be undertaken to raise or relocate dwellings and relevant road levels. Conditions will also ensure air and noise emissions from the pit top facilities and coal transport process will be monitored and managed.

In reaching this decision, the Commission considered carefully the concerns raised by the community; the Department of Planning and Environment's assessment and recommendation for approval; and previous Planning Assessment Commission reviews of the project.