



COMMISSION SIGNS OFF MODIFICATIONS TO BOGGABRI COAL MINE APPROVAL

27 May 2019

The Independent Planning Commission has signed off on changes to the project approval for a coal mine in the state's northwest.

Boggabri Coal Operations Pty Ltd has sought to modify five elements of the existing project approval for its Boggabri Coal Mine, located about 15km northeast of Boggabri.

The company currently has permission to extract up to 8.6 million tonnes of run-of-mine coal annually until December 2033, and operate a coal train loading facility, handling and preparation plant and rail loop and spur line.

This Modification application seeks to:

- Secure biodiversity offsets through alternative mechanisms and extend the timeframe for securing the offsets until February 2020
- Use an approved stockpile area for its product coal
- Undertake drilling and exploration activities within the approved disturbance area, but not within the designated native vegetation corridor
- Transport small tonnages of coal by road for testing and marketing purposes, and
- Realign a small section of the Project boundary with the adjoining Tarrawonga Coal mine.

The Department of Planning & Environment referred the matter to the Commission for determination due to a "high level of public interest in the application". Three Commissioners, Professor Snow Barlow (Panel Chair), Professor Zada Lipman and Dr Ian Lavering, were appointed to scrutinise the application and make a determination.

The Panel met with the Applicant and Department – and held a public meeting in Boggabri in April to listen to the community's views. The community's concerns centred around delays in securing biodiversity offsets, the impacts of drilling and explorations activities, the road transportation of coal and the assessment process.

After carefully considering all the evidence and weighing the community's views, the Commission has today (Monday 27 May 2019) determined to approve the Modification application – agreeing with the Department's assessment that it would not:

- increase the approved mining footprint or approved mining methods
- increase the approved maximum extraction rate
- alter the approved transportation methods for operational purposes
- increase the maximum transport rate, and
- increase the approved environmental impacts of the Project.

In its Statement of Reasons for Decision, the Commission concluded the Modification is in the public interest for the reasons set out below:

- **Secure biodiversity offsets through alternative mechanisms and extended timeframe:**
The contemporising of the biodiversity offset security mechanism and extension of the timeframe for securing the biodiversity offsets to February does not reduce the level of protection offered by the security mechanism.
- **Use an approved stockpile area for its product coal:**
The Commission finds that the use of the coal stockpile area for coal product from Boggabri Coal Mine rather than Tarrawonga Coal Mine does not have an adverse environmental impact. The Modification provides the Applicant with additional flexibility and efficiencies in its operations, by providing the Applicant with additional stockpile area.
- **Undertake drilling and exploration activities within the approved disturbance area but not in the native vegetation corridor:**
The Commission considers that drilling and exploration activities are a normal part of mining operations, which provides the Applicant with detailed information to inform its mining operations. The Commission finds that the environmental impacts from the drilling and exploration activities are minor and can be adequately managed.
- **Transport small tonnages of coal by road for testing and marketing purposes:**
The Commission considers that the road transportation of coal samples for testing and marketing purposes is standard industry practice to ensure quality of product to meet customer specifications. The Commission finds that the relatively small size of the samples and the irregular occurrence of the sampling will not have an adverse impact on traffic impacts, and agrees with the Department's proposed upper annual limit, to ensure that the transport of material remains small and that product coal for market is transported by rail.
- **Realign a small section of the Project boundary:**
The Commission finds that the proposed realignment of the boundary between the Boggabri Coal Mine and Tarrawonga Coal Mine clarifies the responsibilities for the management and rehabilitation of the land and removes any overlap between the two Project Approvals.

"The Commission has determined that the Modification can be approved, subject to the Department's proposed conditions. These conditions are designed to prevent, minimise and/or offset adverse environmental impacts and impacts on the community," it stated.

The Commission's Statement of Reasons for Decision can be read in full here:

<https://www.ipcn.nsw.gov.au/projects/2019/01/boggabri-coal-mine-mod-7>

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