



RIX'S CREEK SOUTH MINE GRANTED APPROVAL TO OPERATE UNTIL 2040

12 October 2019

The state's Independent Planning Commission has granted approval for a Hunter Valley coal mine to continue operating for another 21 years.

Bloomfield Collieries Pty Ltd (the Applicant) lodged a state significant development (SSD) application to expand its Rix's Creek South Mine, 5km northwest of Singleton, and continue open cut mining operations there until 2040.

Under the proposal, it is estimated an additional 25 million tonnes of product coal, with royalties of more than \$104 million, would be recovered from the mine over that period.

Last year, the Commission undertook a review with a public hearing in relation to the application at the request of the Minister.

The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (the Department) finalised its assessment of the SSD application and referred it to the Commission on 19 June 2019 for determination because of community opposition.

Commissioners Mary O'Kane (Chair), Andrew Hutton and Tony Pearson were appointed to consider the application. They met with the Applicant, the Department, Singleton Shire Council and NSW Health and inspected the site and surrounding areas.

A public meeting was held in Singleton to listen to the community's views. Key issues raised at the meeting included air quality, water, biodiversity, final landform and rehabilitation, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and climate change, noise impacts and economic and social benefits.

After carefully considering all the evidence and weighing the community's views, the Commission has today (Saturday 12 October 2019) determined to approve with conditions the SSD application, which will allow an expansion of mining activities to the south of the existing Pit 1 and northwest of the existing Pit 3.

In its Statement of Reasons for Decision, the Commission concluded the application is in the public interest – because (in summary):

- it is “in respect of an existing brownfield site, with existing operational mining infrastructure”
- “noise and vibration impacts have been adequately assessed” and “appropriate mitigation, management measures and accelerated noise attenuation are proposed”
- “air quality has been adequately assessed and found by the Department to be aligned with contemporary best practice for NSW coal mines, and improvements should continue to be pursued over time” and “the Ministry of Health was satisfied with the assessment and recommended conditions”

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- “GHG emissions have been adequately minimised as far as practicable and within the capability of the Applicant’s control... Conditions of consent have been included to require the Applicant to take all reasonable steps to improve energy efficiency and to reduce the Application’s GHG emissions over the life of the Application”
- “biodiversity offsets have been quantified and a staged offset strategy identified to retire the necessary biodiversity offsets for the Application”
- “biodiversity impacts have been appropriately assessed and can be managed through conditions of consent”
- “water resources have been appropriately addressed and conditions of consent proposed to ensure impacts are appropriately managed and mitigated”
- “rehabilitation and risk of early closure has been appropriately assessed... The requirement for a Rehabilitation Strategy and Rehabilitation Management Plan, updated every 3 years, and incorporating risks of unplanned closure into risk assessments, provides assurance that the Applicant’s closure arrangements will consider unplanned closure and have regard for the Council’s strategic planning and community expectations given the close proximity of the Application to the Singleton Township and Camberwell”
- “visual impacts are appropriately assessed and considered to be relatively minor overall given the existing operation”
- “heritage impacts have been assessed and would be appropriately managed through conditions of consent”
- “blasting impacts have been adequately assessed and would be appropriately managed”
- “traffic impacts have been adequately assessed and would be appropriately managed”
- “social and economic impacts have been adequately assessed appropriately managed, consistent with the guidelines for the economic assessment of mining and coal seam gas proposals... The Application would generate economic and social benefits as a result of employment opportunities and revenue to the State”
- “A planning agreement would be entered into by the Applicant and [Singleton] Council which would provide further benefits locally”
- “the Applicant has adequately addressed the recommendations in the Commission’s Review Report” and
- “the Application meets the principles of [Ecologically Sustainable Development]”.

The Commission has imposed conditions on its approval which are designed to “prevent, minimise and/or offset adverse social and environmental impacts; set standards and performance measures for acceptable environmental performance; require regular monitoring and reporting; and provide for the ongoing environmental management of the development.”

Today’s decision comes eight days after an administrative error resulted in the Commission issuing an invalid determination prior to the deadline for public comments on additional information from the Department sent on 24 September 2019. The Commission extended the period for comment until midday yesterday (Friday 11 October 2019).

The Commission’s Statement of Reasons for Decision is available here:

<https://www.ipcn.nsw.gov.au/projects/2019/06/rixs-creek-south-continuation-of-mining-project-ssd-6300>

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