



IPC APPROVES PIT EXTENSION FOR HUNTER VALLEY COAL MINE

4 March 2020

Close to two million tonnes more coal will be extracted from a Hunter Valley mine after the NSW Independent Planning Commission approved with conditions a modification to its existing development consent.

Mt Owen Pty Ltd (the Applicant) sought approval to extend the Barrett Pit at its Glendell Coal Mine, 20km northwest of Singleton, to recover an additional 1.97 million tonnes of run-of-mine (ROM) coal.

The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment's whole-of-government assessment report found the proposed modification would result in:

- a net increase in disturbance area of 4.3 hectares
- a net 0.4-hectare reduction in clearing of native vegetation
- disturbance of one artefact scatter site and partial disturbance of two other sites, and
- no additional noise and dust impacts at sensitive receivers.

The modification application came to the Commission for determination in December last year because the Department received more than 25 public objections during exhibition.

Commissioners Stephen O'Connor (Panel Chair), Professor Zada Lipman and Professor Chris Fell AM were appointed to determine the matter. The Panel met with the Applicant, Department, Singleton Council (Council) and inspected the site and surrounding areas.

They also held a public meeting in Singleton last month to listen to the community's concerns, which centered around air quality; greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions; Aboriginal heritage; rehabilitation, mine closure and water impacts.

After careful consideration of all the evidence, the Commission has today (Wednesday 4 March 2020) determined to approve the modification application.

In its Statement of Reasons, the Commission concluded that the application "*is in the public interest*" and "*on balance the benefits outweigh the costs of the Application*".

The Commission acknowledged the concerns raised by the community in relation to potential air quality impacts but ultimately found the Application would result in a reduction in terms of air quality impacts at nearby receivers compared to the currently approved operation.

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The Commission also addressed concerns from Council in relation to mine closure and final land use, stating that *“the development of a final land use strategy is essential in providing confidence to the community that mine closure is being adequately planned for throughout the life the mine”*. The Commission agreed that the Applicant must propose a more detailed mine closure plan for its Glendell Mine.

In relation to GHG emissions, the Commission noted Glencore’s commitment to *“an annual thermal coal production cap for its global operations and that coal produced under this Application will be included in that cap... (and) that Glencore has announced a target of reducing Glencore’s greenhouse gas emissions intensity by 5% by 2020 compared to a 2016 baseline.”*

It added: *“(T)he Commission is of the view that the minor extension of the Barrett Pit and extraction of an additional 1.97 Mt of ROM coal over an 8 month period will result in a minor increase in GHG emissions which are accounted within the reduction strategy Glencore has in place for its global GHG emissions.”*

The Commission also agreed with the Department’s assessment that there will be *“minimal impact”* on Aboriginal cultural heritage as a result of the modification but amended the recommended conditions of consent to ensure any further artefact finds are considered by the Applicant in its Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management Plan.

The Commission stated the conditions of consent imposed are designed to:

- prevent, minimise and/or offset adverse environmental impacts
- set standards and performance measures for acceptable environmental performance
- require regular monitoring and reporting, and
- provide for the on-going environmental management of the development.

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

<https://www.ipcn.nsw.gov.au/projects/2019/12/glendell-coal-mine-mod-4>

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