



EXTENSION TO NARRABRI MINE RECEIVES CONDITIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONSENT

1 April 2022

The operator of a NSW coal mine will be required to comply with strict performance measures after the Independent Planning Commission conditionally approved its expansion plans.

Whitehaven Coal sought permission to extend longwall operations to the south of its existing Narrabri Underground Mine, located between Gunnedah and Narrabri in the state's northwest, and extract an additional 82 million tonnes of coal to 2044.

The Department of Planning and Environment completed its whole-of-government assessment of the Narrabri Underground Mine Stage 3 Extension Project in January this year; however, the state significant development application came to the Commission for determination under Ministerial delegation.

A three-member Commission panel, comprising Professor Mary O'Kane AC, Chair of the Commission, Professor Snow Barlow and Professor Chris Fell AO, has today (Friday 1 April 2022) determined to grant development consent to the Project, subject to 152 conditions.

"The Commission finds that, on balance, the Application is not inconsistent with [ecologically sustainable development] principles, and that the Project would achieve an appropriate balance between relevant environmental, economic and social considerations," its Statement of Reasons for Decision reads.

In handing down its decision, the Commission took into account the NSW Government's policies on mining and emissions reductions. It also acknowledged objectors' concerns – particularly about greenhouse gas emissions, including the increased methane that is predicted to be released beyond 2030.

The Commission has set strict performance measures to curb the intensity of the mine's Scope 1 and Scope 2 greenhouse gas emissions, which Whitehaven must comply with during the life of the mine.

Whitehaven will also be required by the Commission to complete an Emissions Minimisation Plan to investigate and implement innovative, economically-feasible ways to further reduce the mine's Scope 1 emissions, including through deploying existing, emerging and future technologies.

“Subject to the imposed conditions, the Commission is satisfied that the Project can achieve the requirements of the Resources SEPP [*State Environmental Planning Policy (Resources and Energy) 2021*] and the relevant strategic policy positions with respect to the reduction of fugitive emissions and the recognition of the importance of the continuation of the extraction and exportation of coal to the NSW economy.”

The Commission also put in place measures to ensure local groundwater users affected by the mine’s expansion receive adequate compensation.

“The Commission is of the view that should any groundwater users be affected by the Project, the proposed make good provisions and contingency measures would then apply... [and] would be sufficient in adequately compensating affected groundwater users," it noted.

"[T]he Applicant must provide a compensatory water supply to any landowner of privately-owned land whose rightful water supply is adversely and directly affected... [and] must also provide an alternative long-term supply of water that is equivalent, in quality and volume, to the loss attributable to the development.”

Other issues raised in submissions and examined carefully by the Commission included air quality, noise impacts, subsidence, traffic, visual impacts and heritage, particularly Aboriginal cultural heritage. It concluded these impacts could be effectively avoided, minimised or offset through its imposed conditions of consent.

The Commission noted there is considerable local support for the Project, which it found would generate “net positive economic benefits” through local employment, royalties and tax revenue.

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

<https://www.ipcn.nsw.gov.au/projects/2021/12/narrabri-underground-mine-stage-3-extension-project-ssd-10269>

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