



THURSDAY NOVEMBER 27, 2008

MEDIA RELEASE

REVISED BICKHAM COAL MINE PROPOSAL

Bickham Coal Company today unveiled a revised plan for its proposed open-cut coal mine at Murrurundi in the Upper Hunter Valley, which stands to generate in the vicinity of 3.6 billion dollars in export revenue and create more than one hundred local jobs.

The new plan has been developed in response to perceived impacts the project may have on ground water and surface water.

The new plan involves significant changes to the size, boundaries and depths of the mine.

Under the new proposal:

- The mine is approximately 25 per cent smaller in terms of size and output (with proposed extraction being cut from @ 47 million tonnes to @ 36 million tonnes);
- Extraction beneath the level of the Pages River bed is shifted a further 150 metres away from the river, to at least 300 metres;
- The existing bulk sample pit (closest to the Pages River) is excluded from the mine plan, and will be back-filled;
- The overburden dump area nearest to the Pages River has been shifted a further 100 metres from the river;
- The overburden dump area closest to the Kingdon Ponds is being redesigned to ensure there are no effects on the catchment area;
- There will be no 'G-seam' extraction (deepest level mining) anywhere in the western pit, which accounts for approximately fifty percent of the total mine area;

Bickham Coal Company said the plans had recently been revealed to key government agencies, during a series of technical briefings.

Director John Richards said the company had listened to the Government and community in relation to concerns over water impacts.

“Even though we were confident with the initial mine proposal, we couldn’t ignore the concerns being raised in relation to possible environmental impacts,” Mr Richards said.

“That’s why we’re delivering a new plan that absolutely reduces risks and perceived risks the mine will have on the Pages River and other local water areas.

“Although we’ve reduced the mine size we can still deliver a project of enormous economic benefit to the Upper Hunter, whilst ensuring that water impacts have been addressed.”

The new plan has been developed in tandem with the Water Resource Assessment and Draft Water Management Plan being progressed by Bickham Coal Company, which the Department of Planning asked the company to complete ahead of the mine being considered for assessment as a Major Project.

Aquaterra Senior Hydrogeologist and Bickham consultant Peter Dundon said exhaustive research and modelling had been applied to develop the new plan.

“Bickham Coal Company has effectively taken the mine plan back to the drawing board and devised something intended to lay environmental concerns to rest,” Mr Dundon said.

“Our early modelling of the revised plan shows significantly reduced impacts and addresses the concerns of the Government Departments and some sections of the community.

“Our investigations showed that the risks with the original mine plan were low, but the revisions that Bickham is proposing will further reduce the possibilities of adverse impacts.

“Risks to the Pages River and to water users downstream are negligible.”

Bickham Coal Company said it would host a government agency workshop to further explain the changes and receive feedback from key government agency staff. The company said it was hopeful the new water assessment would go on public display early next year. There will be extensive community consultations.

Under the State Government’s ‘3A’ planning legislation, the Department of Planning and the Planning Minister will ultimately decide if the project is acceptable to be assessed as a Major Project of State Significance.

John Richards added that the company also looked forward to demonstrating the negligible effects the project would have on other parts of the environment and other local industries.

“We are a local company looking at creating many local jobs in a part of the state where jobs are needed and where coal mining is the foundation,” Mr Richards said.

Further information:

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