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MEDIA RELEASE

- PUBLIC EXHIBITION OF BICKHAM WATER STUDY
 - COMMUNITY CONSULTATION PROGRAM
 - 300 JOBS ON OFFER

Bickham Coal Company today said it was in its best position yet to demonstrate the negligible impacts its proposed open-cut coal mine will have on local waterways, now that the Department of Planning has placed the company's updated water study on public exhibition.

The updated water study - known as the Water Resource Assessment and Draft Water Management Plan - was placed on exhibition today after being lodged with the Department of Planning in April.

Bickham was required to complete a detailed water study as part of an assessment process set down by the Department.

The six-week water study exhibition takes the company a step closer to its objective of having the mine proposal assessed and approved under the New South Wales Government's Major Project legislation.

Bickham also announced a voluntary community meeting and information program during the exhibition period to enable stakeholders to understand the updated water study and other aspects of the mine proposal.

"We have spared no effort and expense with our updated water study, which has been delivered by some of Australia's most reputable and respected water experts," Bickham Director John Richards said.

"Built on exhaustive monitoring, modelling, technical analyses and assessments conducted since 2002, it is one of the most comprehensive mining water studies ever undertaken in Australia.

"We believe the information shows very clearly that the revised mine will have negligible impacts on waterways and we are eager for the community to see this."

Mr Richards said the proposed mine offered major economic benefits, which are highlighted in the Department of Planning's strategic document titled 'Coal Mining Potential in the Upper Hunter Valley – Strategic Assessment (Dec 2005)'.

“This government document clearly identifies our site as being suitable for open cut mining, subject to an exhaustive water study being completed and comprehensive assessment undertaken,” Mr Richards said.

“It indicates that our proposal would create 100 direct and a further 200 indirect jobs in an area where jobs are desperately needed.

“It would also generate local income of 20 million dollars every year for the 25 year life of the mine, and in excess of three billion dollars in export revenue.

“All the evidence to date shows that, if delivered responsibly, the mine can co-exist with other industries and communities for the greater benefit of the Hunter.

“Given that a key policy objective of the New South Wales Government is job creation in the Hunter, it is appropriate and encouraging that this project is on the right track towards comprehensive and transparent merit-based assessment.”

To help put perceived impacts the proposed mine might have on local waterways beyond doubt, Bickham last year reduced the size of the project by 25 percent (from 47 million tonnes to 36 million tonnes).

This involved shifting the mine boundaries and below-river excavation further away from local waterways. All the mine changes are reflected in the updated water study.

Aquaterra Senior Principal Hydrogeologist and Bickham consultant Peter Dundon said the water study was very thorough, and was subjected to independent expert review throughout.

“The study was conducted during a range of climatic conditions, and shows that under all conditions the impact of the project on the region's water resources would be negligible,” Mr Dundon said.

“I believe it can be strongly demonstrated that no existing groundwater or surface water supplies will be adversely affected.”

Bickham is an Australian company, owned by Hunter Valley locals with long and proud histories employing locals in the fields of mining and engineering.

Further information:

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