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MEDIA RELEASE

NEW ECONOMIC RESEARCH INDICATES BICKHAM TO DELIVER MORE JOBS THAN EXPECTED, WHERE JOBS ARE NEEDED

New economic research shows that jobs created from the proposed Bickham Coal Mine may be significantly greater than previously estimated.

Research undertaken by the Hunter Valley Research Foundation (HVRF) shows that the 36 million tonne mine could add as many as 386 jobs to the Hunter Region economy, 286 of which would be full time jobs.

This surpasses New South Wales Department of Planning estimates of 100 full time and 200 indirect jobs.

The HVRF research also reaffirms the economic benefits the mine would deliver, concluding there would be a boost of up to \$150 million to the Hunter economy annually, or 3.7 billion dollars over the 25 year life of the mine.

The HVRF says that royalties from the mine - paid to the state government and used to fund vital public infrastructure and services - could exceed an estimated \$216.4 million.

The HVRF notes that while the entire Hunter population increased by 8.6 percent between 1996 and 2006, the Upper Hunter population decreased by 7.8 percent over the same period. During this ten year period, the number of people in one age group - the working age population (25-39 year olds) - fell by about 24 percent.

Although the Upper Hunter population grew more recently (2001 – 2006), the HVRF says the Bickham project could help continue this recent trend by drawing employees to the local area – particularly those in the working age population.

It is expected that most employees will be male and new recruits that are likely to bring their families with them.

Bickham Coal Director John Richards said the information gives hope to many people in the Upper Hunter who want heavy industry and job opportunities to proceed.

“We have always said we will employ local people where possible, and it’s welcome news that we may be able to create many more local jobs than first anticipated,” Mr Richards said.

“At times it is difficult to keep count of how many people are contacting us to ask about job opportunities.

“We can only ask that people be patient as the planning process continues.”

Mr Richards said the company was cooperating with the independent Planning Assessment Commission Panel appointed by the Department of Planning last year.

The Panel is considering water management and protection issues relevant to the proposed mine, and will also hear general community views in a public forum in Scone on March 17 and 18.

The Panel is scheduled to report to the Department of Planning next month.

Bickham is asking that the proposed mine be subjected to rigorous Major Project assessment like all other New South Wales mining projects.

The company has already completed a precursory water study at the request of the Department of Planning. Delivered by some of Australia’s foremost water experts, it is one of the most exhaustive mining project water studies undertaken in Australia.

In 2008 the Company reduced the mine size by 25 percent and shifted the boundaries further away from local waterways to put perceptions of possible environmental impacts beyond doubt.

“Given that we’ve spent more than 10 million dollars following various planning processes since acquiring the site in 2002, we are hopeful of proceeding to full assessment soon and delivering this economic opportunity to the Upper Hunter,” Mr Richards said.

“You would struggle to find a mining project anywhere in Australia that has been scrutinised as closely as the Bickham project, which is why we are at pains to deliver a project that’s economically beneficial and environmentally responsible.”

Further information:

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