



## INDEPENDENT PLANNING COMMISSION APPROVES EXTENSION OF MT PLEASANT MINE

Friday 24 August 2018

The state's Independent Planning Commission has approved with conditions a proposal to extend the life of a coal mine near Muswellbrook, in the Hunter Valley, for a further six years.

MACH Energy Australia already has approval to extract 10.5 million tonnes per annum of run-of-mine (ROM) coal from the Mt Pleasant mine, 4km northwest of Muswellbrook, until December 2020.

The proponent has sought permission to continue open cut mining operations there until the end of 2026 – producing 63 million tonnes of coal, with royalties exceeding \$350 million, over that period. Under its modification application, MACH has proposed:

- making minor changes to the approved mining methods
- extending the Eastern Out of Pit Emplacement (OEA) by 67 hectares and relinquish northern portion of the South West OEA (65 hectares)
- revising the final landform that would remain should mining operations cease at the end of 2026
- increasing the peak construction workforce from 250 to 350 people to expedite construction, and
- removing the Mount Pleasant rail loop and associated infrastructure.

The Department of Planning and Environment referred the matter to the Independent Planning Commission for its consideration in June this year after receiving 355 public submissions – including 250 objecting to the proposal.

Chair of the Commission, Professor Mary O'Kane AC, appointed a three-member panel, comprising Mr Alan Coutts (Panel Chair), Dr Peter Williams and Professor Zada Lipman, to determine the application.

The panel held talks with the applicant and inspected the site and surrounding areas.

They also met with representatives from the Department and Muswellbrook Shire Council, and hosted a public meeting at Muswellbrook on 4 July to listen to residents' views on the proposed extension.

Concerns raised by the community during that meeting centred on:

- potential impacts on air and water quality
- noise pollution
- visual impacts
- impacts on the local thoroughbred industry
- cumulative impacts from mining across the Region
- the final landform

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After careful consideration of the evidence before it and the issues raised by the community, the Commission has decided to approve with conditions the modification application.

In its Statement of Reasons for Decision, published today (Friday 24 August), the Commission found: “The development, if modified, would retain the core elements, including annual ROM coal production, coal processing or waste rock production, and would have a smaller site total disturbance footprint.”

In addition, the Commission found:

- the proponent’s contemporised studies of the original EIS have considered cumulative impacts based on data representing the current surrounding environment, and updated its results, in accordance with relevant legislation
- the proposed conditions of consent are adequate to manage environmental and cumulative impacts resulting from the proposed modification
- the conditions of consent require the proponent to update its management plans and programs regularly
- it is satisfied that the project is consistent with the objects of the Environmental Planning & Assessment Act, and
- the project is in the public interest.

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

<http://ipcn.nsw.gov.au/projects/2018/06/mount-pleasant-coal-mine-extension-of-mine-life>

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