



ASSESSMENT REPORT

NARRABRI COAL MINE

Section 75W Modification - Coal Bulk Sample Road Transport (08_0144 MOD 2)

1 BACKGROUND

The Narrabri Coal Mine is an underground mine located approximately 28 kilometres (km) southeast of Narrabri and 28 km northwest of Boggabri in the New England North West region. The mine is owned by Narrabri Coal Operations Pty Ltd (NCO), a joint venture in which Narrabri Coal Pty Ltd is the major shareholder. Narrabri Coal Pty Ltd is a wholly owned subsidiary of Whitehaven Coal Limited. The mine operates under a Part 3A approval which was granted under delegation from the Minister, in July 2010.

2 PROPOSED MODIFICATION AND PROJECT NEED

Under the existing approval NCO is not allowed to transport coal by road. NCO has submitted a modification application under section 75W of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act). NCO proposes to modify its project approval to allow a one off transportation of a 600 tonne bulk sample of coal by road to the Tarrawonga Coal Mine also located within the Narrabri local government area. The existing approval does not allow transportation of coal by road.

The purpose of the road transport would be to transfer 600 tonnes of coal to the Tarrawonga Coal Mine where it would be sized and sent for bulk testing at the Pacific Carbon facility at Kooragang Island. The Tarrawonga Coal Mine has an existing approval to treat and transport coal to domestic markets. The proposed transfer of coal from Tarrawonga would then be undertaken in accordance with the existing approvals for the Tarrawonga Coal Mine.

The proposed haulage route from Narrabri Coal Mine to Tarrawonga Coal Mine would avoid unsealed local roads, with the proposed route via Kamilaroi Highway then down to the existing approved coal transport haul route between the Gunnedah Coal Loader and Tarrawonga Coal Mine via a combination of public and private haul roads. The transfer of 600 tonnes would be undertaken by road registered vehicles during daylight hours only with an indicative 5 trucks operating undertaking 4-5 loads per day over a 2 day period. This could be varied slightly to extend duration but with a reduced haulage fleet. The use of B-Doubles, if available, would also further reduce the total number of truck movements for the proposed operation. Figure 1 below shows the proposed transport route.

3 STATUTORY CONTEXT

Part 3A

The project approval was granted under delegation from the Minister under Part 3A of the EP&A Act. In accordance with clause 3 of Schedule 6A of the EP&A Act, section 75W of the Act as in force immediately before its repeal on 1 October 2011 and as modified by Schedule 6A, continues to apply to transitional Part 3A projects.

Consequently, this report has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of Part 3A and associated regulations, and the Minister (or his delegate) may approve or disapprove of the carrying out of the project under section 75W of the Act.

Approval Authority

The Minister is the approval authority for the modification application. However, the Director Mining and Industry Projects may determine the application under the Minister's delegation of 14 September 2011 as:

- relevant local councils have not objected to the proposal;
- NCO has not made any reportable political donations; and
- there are less than 10 public submissions in the nature of objections.

Modification

The proposed modification represents a minor one off change to the originally approved operations. The Department is satisfied that it can be treated as a modification of the project approval under section 75W of the EP&A Act.



Figure 1: Proposed Transport Route

4 CONSULTATION

The Department exhibited the modification application on its website but given the short term and minor nature of the proposal, it did not formally notify any agency or the general public that the application had been lodged. The Department notes that Gunnedah Shire Council and Narrabri Shire Council were consulted by NCO during the preparation of the application and provided formal advice confirming that they did not object to the proposed modification based on the information provided on the haulage route and operating hours for the road transportation to Tarrawonga Coal Mine.

5 ASSESSMENT

The environmental impacts associated with the proposed modification are minor in nature. The modified conditions would not lead to any significant increase in environmental impacts resulting from the approved underground mining operations. All other aspects of the mine's operations and the associated impacts would remain unchanged.

The only additional environmental impact would be an increase in heavy vehicles leaving the site for a short period of time with a minor increase in heavy vehicles travelling along the Kamilaroi Highway down to Blue Vale Road. The increase in heavy vehicle traffic as a result of the proposed transfer of coal would be negligible compared to current traffic movements at less than 2.5% of average daily vehicle movements on the Kamilaroi Highway and an approximate increase in daily average vehicle movements of 10% along Blue Vale road – for a 2 day period only.

The Department is satisfied that there would be a minimal increase in noise and impacts on traffic flow and road safety resulting from the proposal.

6 RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS

The Department recommends that the conditions for Narrabri Coal Mine be modified to require NCO to allow a one off transportation of coal by road to Tarrawonga Coal Mine.

7 CONCLUSION

The Department has assessed the modification application in accordance with the relevant requirements of the EP&A Act, including the objects of the Act and the principles of ecologically sustainable development.

Based on this assessment, the Department considers that the proposed modification to be consistent with the approved project. The assessment has found that the proposed changes to the approval would not generate any adverse environmental impacts. Consequently, the Department is satisfied that the proposed modification should be approved, subject to conditions.

8 RECOMMENDATION

It is RECOMMENDED that the Director Mining and Industry Projects, as delegate of the Minister:

- **consider** the findings and recommendations of this report;
- **determine** that the proposed modification falls within the scope of section 75W of the EP&A Act;
- **approve** the application under section 75W, subject to conditions; and
- **sign** the notice of modification Tagged A.


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21/12/11


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21/12/11

