

Part I – EIS Findings

Part I provides a summary of the findings to the environmental assessment provided in this EIS and provides concluding statement about the Project and recommendation regarding whether the Project should proceed.

32.0 Concluding Statement

32.1 The Proposal

The Project seeks to extend the life of the existing open cut mining operation at Rix's Creek until approximately 2037. The continuation of mining operations will extend in a north-westerly direction and require a modification to Mine Lease 1432 for an out of pit dump. The continuation of operations will utilise the existing mine access, Coal Handling and Preparation Plant, coal stockpiling and rail facilities.

32.2 Alternatives

The assessment of potential alternatives to the Project concluded that due the presence of a known resource, the site proximity to existing mining infrastructure, labour force and transportation as well as the brownfield nature of much of the Project area, alternative sites would not offer the same advantages of reduced environmental impacts and operational efficiencies as could be achieved at the Mine.

The 'do nothing' alternative is also deemed unacceptable as it would see a significant employer in Singleton close which would have immediate social and economic impacts on the community. There would also be economic impact to the wider region and State, if the do nothing alternative prevailed due to lost capital expenditure and royalties.

The Project therefore presents the best balance for the community and environment as opposed to any alternative.

32.3 Justification for the Proposal

This EIS has assessed the potential impacts of the Project in accordance with the DGRs issued on 13 March 2014 and the supplementary DGRs issued on 12 July 2014. All relevant regulatory requirements and the findings from the consultation program undertaken for the Project have also been considered in its preparation.

The Project as designed, after considering all options, will maximise the continued social and economic benefits from the extraction of this coal resource. At the same time it will minimise any impacts to the natural environment.

Further, the Project is consistent with the objects of the EP&A Act when the social and economic benefits are weighed carefully against its predicted social and environmental costs.

When the management and mitigation measures committed to in this EIS are adopted, the residual environmental impacts of the Project are within acceptable limits. These impacts are justifiable when considered against the need for the Project and its social and economic benefits.

32.4 Sustainability of the Proposal

The Project has been assessed utilising a risk-based approach to appropriately identify the potential environmental impacts of the Project. The identified potential environmental impacts were then the subject of an environmental assessment which has incorporated a number of activities aimed at improving the overall sustainability of the Project including:

- An assessment of existing site characteristics (the existing environment);
- Consultation with relevant government agencies;
- Engagement with Aboriginal and community stakeholders;
- Environmental risk analysis;

- Application of the principles of ecologically sustainable development;
- Redesign of the Project where possible to avoid potential environmental impacts; and
- Identification of management strategies, mitigation measures and monitoring programs to minimise adverse impact upon the local environment and nearby communities.

At each stage of the assessment the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development have been incorporated. As a result it has been concluded that with the recommended management measures in place the Project would be undertaken in a suitable manner.

32.5 Conclusion

This EIS has assessed the Project against the requirements of the EP&A Act and the principles of ESD. This assessment has concluded that the Project is consistent with the objective of the Act and principles of ESD.

A range of positive benefits associated with the development have also been identified including the economic benefits to the local, regional and State economies including:

- Generation of a total of \$1,072.2 million of incremental benefits over the life of the Project including revenue and worker wages;
- Continued employment of 375 people;
- Increased coal exports increasing NSW real gross State product by 0.04 percent and real gross regional product for the Hunter Region by 0.26 percent; and
- Increased spending in other sectors, stimulating the demand for goods and services.

The benefits of the Project would outweigh its potential impacts with the implementation of the proposed management, mitigation and offset measures as recommended by this EIS in place. It is considered that it is appropriate and in the public interest to approve the Project.

Part J – References

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