

**DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING**  
*Major Development Assessment*

***For Decision***

**MODIFICATION**  
**INVINCIBLE OPEN CUT EXTENSION PROJECT**

**PURPOSE**

To determine an application from Coalpac Pty Limited (Coalpac) to modify the project approval for the Invincible Open Cut Extension Project.

**BACKGROUND**

The Invincible coal mine is located about 24 kilometres north-west of Lithgow in the Western Coalfield (see Figure 1).

On 7 September 2007, the Minister approved an extension to the open cut mining operations at the mine.

Under this approval, Coalpac is allowed to produce up to 350,000 tonnes of ROM coal a year, and truck it to domestic markets.

Coalpac started mining in the extension area in October 2006.

At present, Coalpac is prohibited from washing any coal from these operations on site, as it did not assess the impacts of this in its environmental assessment of the project.

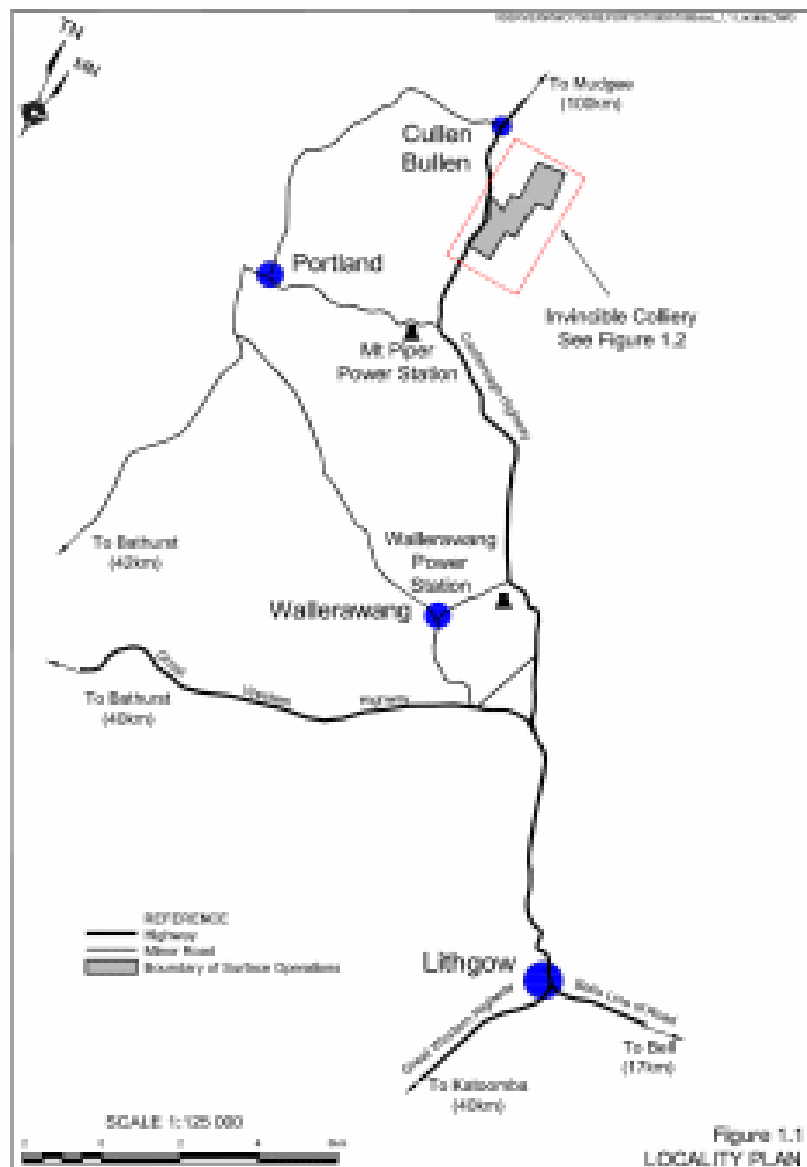


Figure 1: Location of Invincible Colliery

## PROPOSED MODIFICATION

Coalpac proposes to wash coal from its open cut mining operations in the existing coal preparation plant on site.

This coal preparation plant was constructed in 1977 for the underground mining operations at the mine, and has been on care and maintenance since 1998.

Under its modified proposal, Coalpac would be able to extract coal from its open cut extension area (see Figure 2) and truck it to the coal preparation plant on site for processing.

After processing, the product coal would either be stockpiled on site, or trucked to domestic markets, consistent with the existing approval.

Water for the coal preparation plant would come from the existing water storage dam on site; and the tailings from the coal preparation plant would be deposited in the existing tailings storages on site (see Figure 3).

ON 4 April 2005, Coalpac submitted an application to the Department seeking approval for the proposed modification under under Section 75W of the EP&A Act.

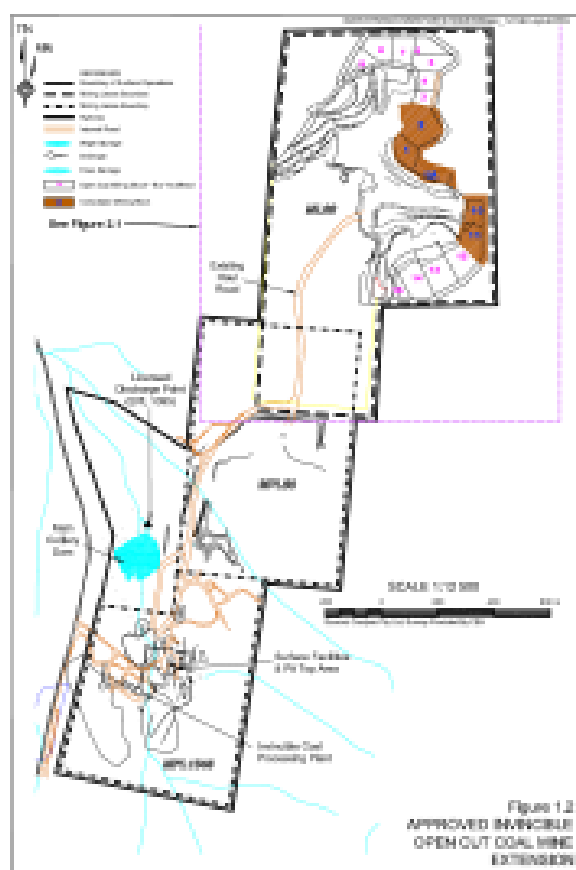


Figure 2: Site Layout

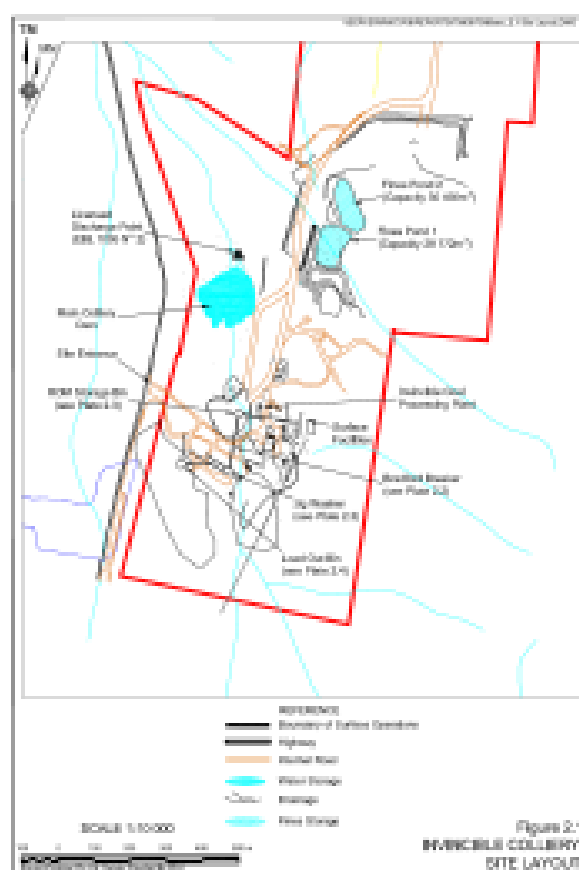


Figure 3: Coal Preparation Plant Layout

## STATUTORY CONTEXT

The Minister was the approval authority for the original project application under Part 3A of the EP&A Act, and is consequently the approval authority for this application under Section 75W of the EP&A Act.

## CONSULTATION

Section 75W of the EP&A Act does not require the Department to consult with anyone in relation to the proposed modification. However, the Department referred the application to the Lithgow City Council (Council), the Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC), Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and Forests NSW (the landowner for the Invincible open cut extension) for comment.

Forests NSW did not provide a response; DECC and DPI did not object to the proposal; and Council sought restrictions on the amount of coal hauled that was allowed to be hauled on local public roads, and a planning agreement to enhance community facilities in the area.

Both of the issues raised in Council's submission were addressed in the existing conditions of approval, and are not relevant to the proposed modification which would not alter the amount of trucks on the road network or increase the demand for community facilities.

## CONSIDERATION OF ISSUES

Environmental aspects associated with the project have been considered and are summarised in Table 1 below.

Issue	Department's Consideration	Impact
Disposal of coal processing wastes	Coalpac has demonstrated that tailings storages on site are of sufficient capacity to contain all the tailings that are likely to be generated by processing the approved coal production from the open cut operations. Coarse coal rejects would initially be used to fill the Cullen Main East mining void, enabling this void to be rehabilitated. Once this site is filled, coarse rejects would be placed against the highwall in the open cut. The Department is satisfied that the Invincible site has sufficient capacity to contain all coal wastes generated by the coal preparation plant in a manner that is unlikely to impact water quality or require additional ground disturbance.	Low
Hours of operation	The hours of operation for the project would be unchanged at 7 am to 10pm.	Nil
Operational Noise	The noise operation of the coal preparation plant would meet the mine's noise criteria and add, at most, 2 dB(A) to the noise impacts at the neighbouring residences. The Department is satisfied that the proposal would not result in any significant operational noise impacts.	Very Low
Water Balance	Coalpac has revised its water balance by taking into account the process water requirements of the coal preparation plant. Even in a 10 percentile dry year, the plant would have access to sufficient water supplies to continue its operations without interruption.	Very Low
Water Management	The proposed modification would not require any additional water management infrastructure and is predicted to meet the water quality requirements contained in the DECC's Environmental Protection Licence for the site. The Department is satisfied that water quality at the site will not be materially altered by the proposed modification plant.	Very Low
Transport and Access	The proposal does not seek to produce any more coal than is currently approved, nor does it alter the 200,000 tonnes per year limit of coal allowed to be transported to domestic markets other than the Mount Piper and Wallerawang power stations.	Nil

Air Quality	Air quality criteria that apply to the site would continue to apply and are predicted to be met. The Department is satisfied that impact to air quality would be very low.	Very Low
Area of disturbance	There would be no change to the area of disturbance at the site. Consequently, the modification would not have any additional impact on flora and fauna, nor would there be any need to alter erosion and sediment control measures employed on the site.	Nil

**Table 1:** *Environmental impacts of the project.*

Following this assessment, the Department is satisfied that the impacts associated with the proposed modification are minor, and could be mitigated and/or managed to ensure an acceptable level of environmental performance.

Existing conditions of approval (for example regarding the Noise Monitoring Program and Site Water Management Plan) are considered to be sufficient to ensure an appropriate level of environmental performance in relation to the coal preparation plant.

### **RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS**

The Department has recommended conditions for the proposal. Coalpac does not object to the imposition of these conditions.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is RECOMMENDED that the Minister:

- consider this submission;
- approve the proposal under section 75W of the EP&A Act; and
- sign the attached notice of modification (tagged A).

Chris Wilson  
**Executive Director**  
**Major Project Assessment**

Frank Sartor MP  
**Minister for Planning**