

28 February 2013

For Immediate Release

MEDIA RELEASE

Watermark EIS on Public Exhibition

After more than two years of preparation, involving scientific assessment by a significant number of environmental and technical experts, the Environment Impact Statement (EIS) for the Shenhua Watermark Coal Project has been released for public consultation by the NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure (DP&I).

The exhibition period will run from Thursday 28th February 2013 to Friday 26th April 2013.

The DP&I required the EIS to specifically consider potential impacts on soil and land capability and other land uses such as agriculture, as well as impacts on water resources, biodiversity, heritage, air quality, noise, traffic and visual amenity.

Project Manager for Shenhua Watermark, Mr Paul Jackson believes the Shenhua Watermark EIS, which runs to more than 3000 pages, is one of the most thorough and rigorous assessments ever undertaken in NSW.

“We have invested considerable resources and time to ensure the project is compatible with the environmental values of the area and the proposal now on display has been refined following extensive discussion and input from the local community, scientific experts and government agencies.

“This mine plan allows the national, regional and local benefits of coal mining to be unlocked while ensuring strict environmental management measures are in place to preserve the local environment.

“All of the scientific studies contained in the EIS were peer reviewed by leading independent experts in their fields, so the community can have a high level of confidence in the conclusions drawn,” Mr Jackson said.

“This EIS demonstrates that if our project is approved, that we can and will mine in an environmentally responsible manner with negligible impact on the environment,” Mr Jackson said.

“This is an exciting project for the region that will deliver significant jobs and investment over the long term.

“We look forward to continuing to work closely with the community to ensure the benefits of this project are realised in a balanced and responsible way.”



The EIS is available to view during business hours at:

- DP&I Information Centre: 22-33 Bridge Street, Sydney;
- DP&I Information Centre website: <http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au>;
- Gunnedah Shire Council Offices: 63 Elgin St, Gunnedah;
- Gunnedah Shire Library: 271-275 Conadilly St, Gunnedah;
- Tamworth Regional Council: 437 Peel Street, Tamworth;
- Liverpool Plains Shire Council: 60 Station Street, Quirindi;
- Nature Conservation Council: Level 2, 5 Wilson St, Newtown, Sydney; and
- Hansen Bailey website: <http://www.hansenbailey.com.au>.

The exhibition period for the EIS is only one of a number of ongoing stakeholder forums. Shenhua is committed to ensuring that community concerns are heard and resolved as soon as possible. Shenhua Watermark will run a public drop in day to ensure the community has the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification if required.

Public Drop in day will be held on: Wednesday 20th March 2013 from 9am – 6pm at Gunnedah PCYC, View Street Gunnedah NSW 2380.

The DP&I is responsible for displaying the EIS and receiving submissions. See www.planning.nsw.gov.au

Submissions received during the public exhibition period, along with Shenhua Watermark's response to submissions document, will be made available on DP&I's website, and these will be carefully considered as part of DP&I's assessment of the project.

The EIS process aims to ensure that the project's potential environmental, social and economic impacts, both direct and indirect, are examined and addressed. The Shenhua Watermark EIS has been prepared in accordance with Part 4 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act)* and will inform a decision on whether the project should proceed and, if so, under what conditions.

ENDS

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Key Features of the Watermark EIS

- Shenhua Watermark will not mine the black soil Liverpool Plains. The Watermark Project will be confined to the ridge country. There is no disturbance to Mt Watermark or the Breeza State Forest.
- Extensive mapping and geophysical surveys have confirmed that the highly productive Gunnedah Formation groundwater aquifer, which is the main water source for local farmers, does not exist within the Project Disturbance Boundary. The closest occurrence of this aquifer is 900 metres from the north-eastern corner of the Eastern Mining Area and more than 1.3 kilometres to the south of the Project Boundary.
- There will be a minimum 150 metre buffer from the nearest mining area to the alluvial black soil Liverpool Plains.
- The groundwater model predicts that the volume of water removed from Zones 3, 7 and 8 of the *Water Sharing Plan for the Upper and Lower Namoi Groundwater Sources 2003* combined due to mining is 35.7 Megalitres per annum on average. This is a negligible quantity of water being equivalent to about 25% of the average pumping rate of 142 Megalitres per annum from a single licenced agricultural bore in the Upper Namoi Alluvium within 10km from the Project Boundary.
- The EIS demonstrates that Shenhua Watermark can develop a mine plan that minimises potential environmental and social impacts whilst maximising resource recovery and operational efficiency.
- Shenhua Watermark will require a workforce of up to 600 full-time equivalent employees during construction and an average of 425 full-time equivalent employees during the operation of the Project.
- Early and progressive rehabilitation of the overburden emplacement areas will be undertaken.
- The predicted groundwater levels within the Western Mining Area final void will remain below the regional water table by approximately 1-2 metres, indicating the pit lake void will act as a groundwater sink, not a source. Hence no overland spillage of water into the environment will occur.
- Based on the population estimates obtained from the field survey approximately 262 Koalas may require translocation over the life of the Project. (This equates to approximately 0.07% (8.7 koalas) per annum of the total population of Koala within the Gunnedah LGA over 30 years).
- A total of 738 hectares of Box Gum Woodland and Derived Native Grassland (Critical Endangered Ecological Communities) will be removed progressively over the life of the Project, and 51 hectares of other listed vegetation communities and flora species (Endangered Ecological Communities).



- The Biodiversity Offset Strategy as a whole will address the predicted loss of vegetation by ultimately providing, following revegetation and rehabilitation initiatives:
 - 6,366 hectares of Box Gum Woodland and Derived Native Grassland (Critical Endangered Ecological Communities);
 - 1,759 hectares of other listed Endangered Ecological Communities; and
 - 4,890 hectares of other woodland vegetation.
- No Land Capability Class II land will be disturbed as a result of the Project.
- It is proposed that 1,000 hectares of rehabilitated land with Land Capability Class III characteristics within the Disturbance Boundary will be reinstated for agricultural purposes. The remaining rehabilitated land will be used for ecological conservation through the restoration of native woodland and grassland.
- The Project will not have any impact on the alluvial soils or agricultural productivity of land outside the Project Boundary and the Biodiversity Offset Areas.
- The direct annual output of the Project is estimated at \$744 Million per annum. In contrast, the direct annual output of the continued use of the agricultural lands and water for agricultural purposes that will be utilised by the Project is estimated at \$5 Million per annum.
- The direct and indirect local region employment provided by the Project will be up to 908 full time equivalent jobs compared to up to 41 agricultural-related jobs that would be forgone as a result of the Project.
- The Project will have a net production benefit of \$3,047 Million with a minimum of \$1,310 Million of these net production benefits accruing to Australia.
- In contrast, the present value of the continued use of the agricultural lands and water for agricultural purposes that will be utilised by the Project is estimated at \$40 Million. Based on these comparative values, the Project is considered to be a significantly more efficient land use than continued agricultural production.