

For Immediate Release

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MEDIA RELEASE
Concerns Raised at Watermark Information Sessions

Health, employment, water and cumulative impacts were just some of the concerns raised at the Watermark Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) information sessions held last week. More than 50 interested stakeholders attended five information sessions held in Tamworth, Breeza, Gunnedah and Quirindi to identify issues to be addressed in the Watermark EIS.

Environmental Consultants Hansen Bailey, who is preparing the EIS, along with Shenhua Watermark representatives attended all sessions, listening to the feedback and concerns of community members.

Some of the issues raised concentrated on employment, in particular: concern over the associated impacts of a transient workforce; sustaining labour for non-mining industries; and the preference for the mine to use a local workforce.

Best-practice mine rehabilitation was discussed, with the community requesting ongoing monitoring be undertaken well past the life of the mine.

Concern over the impacts on groundwater and surface water were raised at every session, along with the need to protect Aboriginal artefacts and cultural heritage.

Social and cumulative impacts were also a concern including the impact on housing, increasing rent and property prices, impact on land values surrounding the mine, education, cost of living, childcare facilities, access to health professionals and employment.

An increase in the frequency of coal trains, potential vibration impacts on properties, and dust from train carriages were also raised as concerns.

A number of suggestions were also put to the project team for consideration. These included, but not limited to, a recommendation for independent heavy metal baseline testing of crops, pastures, livestock and soils in and around the mining and rail area.. It was also suggested that Shenhua develop a benchmark for water testing and more community input into what was tested.

All issues and suggestions raised will be forwarded to the project team for consideration in the EIS. The consultation program will continue in the new year with a second round of workshops planned for late February 2012.

ENDS

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