

Shenhua offers last million to community

COAL giant Shenhua has announced the fifth and final round of \$1 million worth of grants under its Watermark Community Fund.

The company launched the latest round of grants at a cocktail party in Gunnedah this week to celebrate the Chinese Moon Festival.

More than 150 members of the local community, industry stakeholders and local government representatives joined Shenhua representatives at Quirang Country Gardens.

The community fund was pledged by Shenhua as part of the granting of its exploration licence in 2009, including a commitment of \$1 million per annum for up to five years of exploration.

The final round will focus on applications for environmental and indigenous projects, in particular.

Shenhua chairman Liu Xiang told guests Shenhua's goal was not just to operate a mine, but to become a valued member of the local community.

"We take our commitments in this regard very seriously, and our success will be measured by not just the economic benefits we can deliver to the region, but on the relationships we forge with the local community."

He said one of the most important ventures so far in this regard had been the work of the company's community reference groups, established as a liaison between the company and the community.

Gunnedah Shire mayor Owen Hasler acknowledged the professionalism of the company and the potential for economic growth, should the project be approved.

"With the latest census figures indicating that Gunnedah has the highest growth rate, at 6.1 per cent, of any community in the North West, we must recognise that mining activity such as Shenhua's Watermark development will ensure this continued growth rate and achieve at least the predicted increase of 1000 in population over

the next decade or so," Cr Hasler said.

Tamworth Regional Council mayor Col Murray said the company had been "quietly and methodically going about their business to achieve a social licence for a coalmine at Watermark".

"We believe that Shenhua has set a new benchmark in the quality and presentation of their EIS and we are hopeful that future mining application in the region will be of a similar quality," Cr Murray said.

Cr Ian Lobsey, mayor of Liverpool Plains Shire, said the council was "very much aware of the community's concerns about the environment" from the proposed mining activity, however they were convinced Shenhua had adequately addressed these concerns.



FESTIVAL GIFT: Gunnedah Shire mayor Owen Hasler and Shenhua chairman Liu Xiang at the cocktail party celebrating the Chinese Moon Festival.