

Shenhua exploration ends

THERE was little fanfare on Friday as Shenhua wound-up its Stage 4 exploration drilling program and the last drill-rig left the Watermark site.

Shenhua's new Project Manager, Paul Jackson, said the information from the exploration program, as well as rigorous baseline environmental monitoring and extensive community consultation would be now used to inform the Environmental Impact Statement which Shenhua plans to submit later this year.

"The level of detail and investment Shenhua has put into the exploration program clearly demonstrates the company is

committed to understanding the environment we are working in," Mr Jackson said.

He said the exploration program was "one of the largest and most detailed exploration programs [he had] ever seen".

Mr Jackson said the exploration process had resulted in greater knowledge about underground water systems in the region, than had ever been available before.

"As well as informing our own environmental planning, this extensive body of research has also been provided to help inform the Namoi Catchment Water Study.

"Along the way, we have held more than 400 stakeholder meetings since 2009.

"These have included one-on-one meetings, community information sessions, presentations to community groups and 26 meetings with the Community Consultative Committee."

The exploration program itself was managed by engineering firm GHD, who have in the process opened a regional office in Gunnedah.

Conducted over four stages, since June 15, 2009, the program included drilling more than 880 bore holes, equating to 136,467 metres, with up to 12 rigs drilling at any one time.

Seven seismic lines – the use of sound wave 'radar' – totalling

57,375 metres in length were also surveyed to provide additional information to support the hydro geological mapping.

Approximately 22.7 square kilometres of Ground Magnetic Survey has been carried out to help identify the location of any dykes or faults underground.

A total of 16,890m of Electrical Resistivity Survey, comprising 11 lines and 60 arrays have been surveyed across the site, which has enabled the project team to define the structure of the aquifers.

Mr Jackson said the Watermark project "raised the bar" in terms of scientific and environmental

rigour, also conducting base-line environmental monitoring, more detailed and more extensive than required by state or federal legislation.

"Since 2009, Shenhua Watermark has also conducted base-line environmental monitoring across the project area and further afield," he said.

"This includes 39 dust, particulate and air quality monitors as well as 12 surface water and 93 groundwater monitoring sites.

"The quality of data we are collecting will ensure that our Environmental Impact Statement is one of the most robust documents ever prepared."