

NOTICE OF INDEPENDENT HEARING & ASSESSMENT PANEL WILPINJONG COAL PROJECT

The Department of Planning is currently assessing an application from Wilpinjong Coal Pty Ltd for the Wilpinjong Coal Project under Part 3A of the *Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act).

The Wilpinjong Coal Project involves establishing a new open cut coal mine and associated facilities about 40 kilometres northeast of Mudgee, near Wollar. The project includes the:

- extraction of up to 13 million tonnes of coal a year over a period of 21 years;
- construction and operation of associated infrastructure, such as a rail spur off the Gulgong-Sandy Hollow railway line, coal handling and preparation plant, offices, workshops, etc.; and
- rehabilitation and revegetation of the site.

The Minister for Planning, the Hon Frank Sartor MP, is the approval authority for the project.

The Environmental Assessment for the project was exhibited earlier this year, and the Department of Planning is currently considering the public submissions that were received during the exhibition period.

However, under section 75G of the EP&A Act, the Minister has now constituted a Panel of Experts to assess certain aspects of the project in more detail.

The panel is comprised of:

- Mr Allen Kearns (Chair);
- Mr Hugh Middlemis; and
- Mr Ross Hardie.

Under its terms of reference, the panel is required to assess the following aspects of the Wilpinjong Coal Project:

- surface water impacts;
- groundwater impacts;
- flora and fauna impacts; and
- vegetation offsets and the rehabilitation of the mine.

The panel will receive written submissions relevant to its terms of reference until **28 October 2005**, and hold a round table panel meeting in Mudgee from **9 November 2005**.

If you would like to make a submission to the panel or appear at the panel meeting, please write to:

IHAP Secretariat
c/o Department of Planning
GPO Box 39
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Your submission must reach the IHAP Secretariat by **28 October 2005**, and should include:

- your name, address, and contact details (phone number or email);
- the matters that you would like to bring to the attention of the panel; and
- a clear statement on whether or not you would like to appear at the panel meeting in Mudgee.

If you do not want your submission to be made publicly available, please state this in your submission.

While the panel is assessing the project, the Environmental Assessment for the project will be available at:

- www.planning.nsw.gov.au (Major Project Assessment - Major Projects Register);
- www.excelcoal.com.au;
- **Department of Planning:** 23-33 Bridge Street, Sydney (1300 305 695);
- **Mid-Western Regional Council:** 86 Market Street, Mudgee (6372 5888); and
- **Wollar Service Centre:** cnr Maitland and Barnett Streets, Wollar (6373 4227).

During this period, the Department of Planning will also provide copies of the CD-ROM of the Environmental Assessment of the project to people upon request free of charge.

Enquiries: Mike Young (9228 6481)