

# Media release



Friday, 4 October 2013

## **Coalpac Coal Project recommended for refusal due to significant rock formation and biodiversity impacts**

The Department of Planning and Infrastructure has recommended that the Coalpac Consolidation Project near Lithgow should not be approved in its current form.

A final decision will now be made by the independent Planning Assessment Commission (PAC), made up of different panel members to those who conducted a review of the project last year.

The department's assessment found that the open cut mining operations as currently proposed would be incompatible with the natural setting which includes unique rock formations and sensitive and important biodiversity areas.

The mine site is located just two kilometres from the Gardens of Stone National Park which forms part of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage listing. The area has significant biodiversity and geological values, particularly due to its rock formations known as "pagodas".

The department found that, within this setting, the narrow elongated nature of the mine plan would cause a significantly greater impact on the surrounding area compared to more conventional mines of a similar size.

The rock pagodas, in particular, are open rock faces estimated to be around 250 million years old which the independent PAC has previously found to be worthy of total protection from mining.

The proposed expansion involves mining as close as 50m from these pagodas, carving into the rocky slopes and conservation areas which form their base, heavily impacting on their setting.

The department concluded that, while the project would generate economic benefits, its substantial environmental impacts would outweigh those benefits.

The department's conclusion is consistent with an independent review of the project undertaken by the PAC last year, which included public hearings.

The proposed mine, located 25km northwest of Lithgow, was proposed to produce up to 3.5 million tonnes of coal a year over 21 years.

The department acknowledges that Coalpac has proposed to scale-back its initial proposal to limit impacts on significant rock pagodas, but even with these changes the mine will have an unacceptable impact on the conservation significance of the area.

The department's assessment found it would be difficult to rehabilitate this bushland back to its original state, given the steep slopes that would be created by the mine after it progressed along the valley floor.

In the end, this is not the right place for a major open cut coal mine. The department has undertaken a balanced assessment which has carefully considered the economic benefits of the mine against the environmental impacts.

The department's assessment report and recommendation can be found at:  
[http://majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au/index.pl?action=view\\_job&job\\_id=4332](http://majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au/index.pl?action=view_job&job_id=4332)

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