

Mine project opposed

Author: JOANNE McCARTHY

Date: 23/11/2010

Words: 223

Source: NCH

Publication: Newcastle Herald

Section: News

Page: 14

THE NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water has publicly criticised Coal and Allied over plans to expand the Mount Pleasant coalmine at Muswellbrook.

In what is believed to be the first public challenge to a coal mine proposal in the shire, the department criticised environmental assessments provided by the company and expressed "disappointment" that earlier issues raised by the department had not been addressed.

In its formal submission to the Department of Planning, the environment department emphasised the company had not provided a fauna survey for the affected mine site area, and only a limited flora survey.

The company relied on fauna and flora surveys carried out in the mid 1990s before the original consent for the Mount Pleasant mine in 1999, despite evidence that the proposed expansion of the mine would affect threatened species.

The department also challenged the company's submission that environmental offsets were not required, and advised the Department of Planning it was unable to support the proposal.

The department joins Muswellbrook Council and the thoroughbred racing industry in opposing the mine expansion, after Coal and Allied's application to increase the mine's operating life until December 2022.

The original Mount Pleasant mine consent included the mining of nearly 200 million tonnes of coal.

The latest expansion proposal was made bypassing local councils and leaving Planning Minister Tony Kelly as consent authority.