

# Community Newsletter

September 2013, No.3



## SPECIAL EDITION: ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

The Rocky Hill Coal Project Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is now on public exhibition. This newsletter gives you an overview of some of the key findings. The EIS was prepared by an independent, expert consultancy firm. It presents the outcomes of extensive studies and community consultation about matters including: air quality; noise and vibration; surface water and groundwater; visibility; Aboriginal

and European heritage; soils; agriculture; traffic and transport; and socio-economic aspects. It identifies the many benefits from the Project as well as safeguards to minimise any environmental and social impacts.

We always welcome your feedback and questions. Please visit our Project Information Centre (see back page for details) to have a chat about our plans or see the reports and studies for yourself.

## KEY PROJECT DETAILS AND EIS FINDINGS

- Up to 25 million tonnes of run-of-mine (raw) coal to be mined from four open cut pits.
- Up to 100 construction jobs and up to 150 jobs when fully operational.
- An injection of between \$3.1M and \$8M a year by direct spending into the local economy with a flow-on effect of between \$7.1M and \$18.5M annually (based on conservative estimates and economic impact modelling).
- A Community Grants Program, including a donation of 50c/tonne of product coal to a charitable trust which could generate between \$7M and \$8M to benefit the Gloucester community.
- Training opportunities, apprenticeships and University scholarships for local people.
- More than \$2 million in upgrades to local roads and intersections, including the replacement of the Jacks Road Bridge.
- Three visibility and noise barriers to be built which will screen almost all mining activities from view.
- Use of real-time noise and air quality monitoring and other safeguards to minimise any noise and air quality impacts.
- Negligible impacts on surface water and groundwater.
- Adoption of all 23 recommendations from an independent Social Impact Assessment to maximise socio-economic benefits and minimise impacts.
- A commitment that GRL land not being used for mining will continue to be used for agriculture.
- Progressive rehabilitation of areas disturbed by mining activities so the land can be quickly returned to productive grazing and nature conservation land uses.
- No final "void" or hole left at the end of the Project.

We are here

Applicant requests Director-General's requirements

Department of Planning and Infrastructure prepares Director-General's requirements in association with Council and agencies.

Department of Planning and Infrastructure issues Director-General's requirements and places them on the Department's website [www.majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au](http://www.majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au)

Applicant lodges Development Application and Environmental Impact Statement. Department of Planning and Infrastructure determines whether application and EIS meet their requirements.

Department of Planning and Infrastructure places Development Application and EIS on public exhibition and seeks submissions from the public, Council and agencies.

Applicant provides responses to and clarification of issues arising from the exhibition phase, together with any amendment to the EIS.

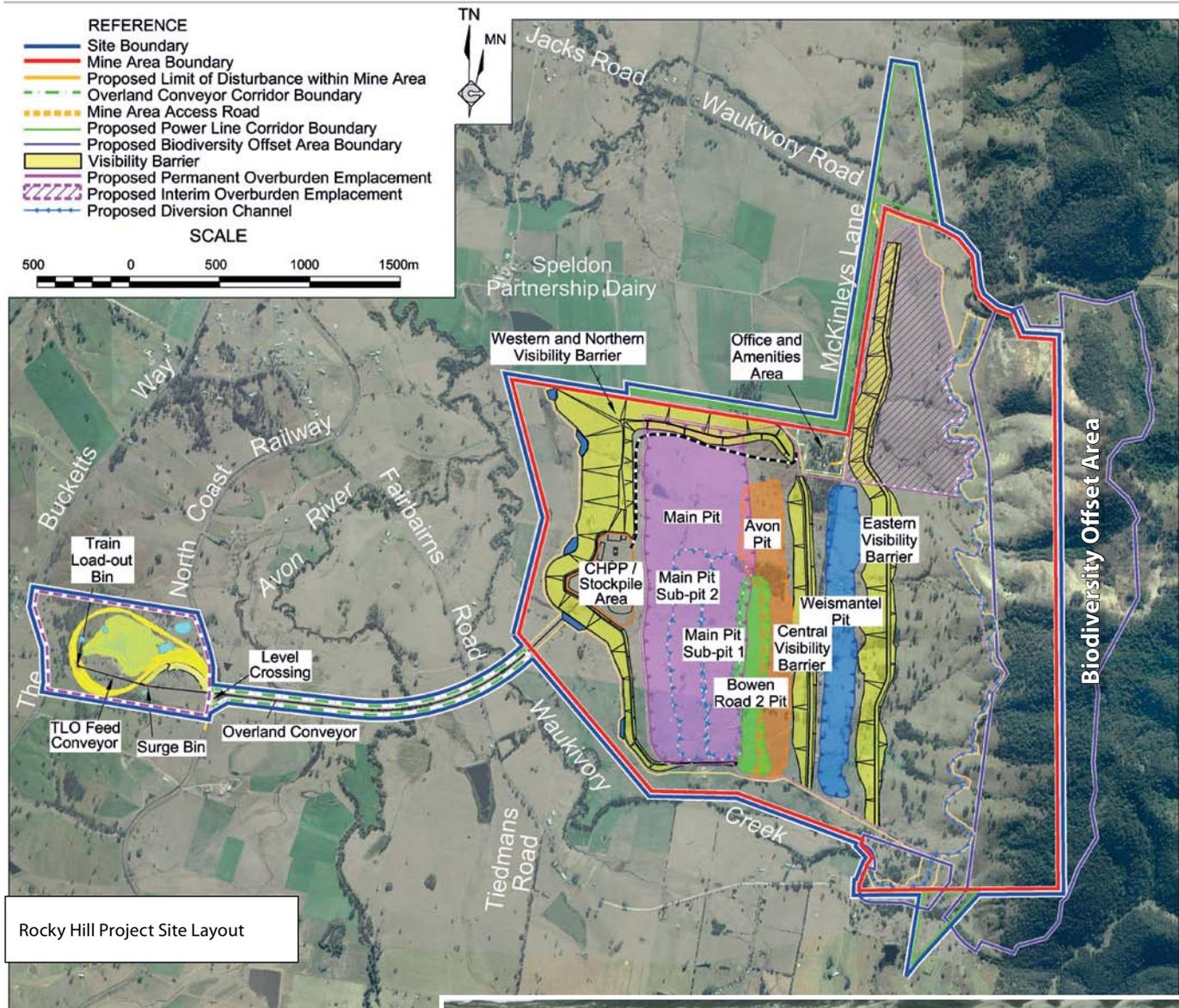
Department of Planning and Infrastructure prepares its assessment report in consultation with Council and agencies.

Department of Planning or Planning Assessment Commission make determination.

Notice of Determination issued.



## WHAT IS PROPOSED?



The Rocky Hill Coal Project is seeking approval to mine up to 2.5Mt of Run-of-Mine (ROM) coal per annum for approximately 14 years.

The Project will involve:

- four open cut pits
- three overburden emplacements which store the rock and dirt
- a Coal Handling and Preparation Plant (CHPP) with coal stockpile areas, a switchyard, workshop and ancillary buildings
- three visibility and noise barriers to shield operations
- a Rail Load-out Facility including a rail loop and train loader, the majority of which will be out of view
- a 3km long overland conveyor



connecting the CHPP area to the Rail Load-out Facility. The conveyor will be positioned above the 1:500 year flood level

- dispatch of an average of less than two train loads of coal per day to the Port of Newcastle

- the establishment and permanent conservation of a **267ha Biodiversity Offset Area** located along the eastern side of the mine, extending from the Waukivory Creek to Waukivory Road.

## TRANSPORT AND TRAFFIC

All coal will be transported by overland conveyor and train – there will be no road haulage of coal.

During operations, there will be between 186 to 294 light vehicle and between 4 and 16 heavy vehicle movements per day. One return trip equals two movements. The majority of light vehicle movements will be at shift change. Heavy vehicle movements will be dispersed throughout the day. To put these numbers into perspective, they represent less than 10% of the traffic on The Bucketts Way south of Gloucester.

Despite the traffic studies confirming roads and intersections have the capacity to handle the mine's traffic, we plan to spend more than \$2 million on various local road improvements, more than Council has budgeted for Shire-wide capital road and bridge works over the 2013-2015 period.

- An upgrade of the intersection at the corner of Jacks Road and The Bucketts Way providing a right turn lane and left turn deceleration lane.
- An upgrade and widening of Jacks Road and part of Waukivory Road.
- Upgrades of the intersections of Jacks Road and Waukivory Road and Waukivory Road and McKinleys Lane.
- Construction of a new, safer, two lane unrestricted load limit Jacks Road Bridge. This will give back to the residents west of the Avon River their access to The Bucketts Way via Jacks Road which has been denied since April 2012.

**The expert consultants found: "It has been assessed that, with the implementation of the proposed upgrades, mitigation and management measures, no significant**

## DID YOU KNOW ?

### CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

All of our studies on major issues including noise, groundwater, surface water and air quality took into account the cumulative impacts of other local mining and industrial activities. The studies found that while all operations would have their own impacts, the cumulative impacts for the Rocky Hill Coal Project were negligible.

**impacts are expected upon the existing road and rail network, rail crossings or road users as a result of the Proposal. Rather, the benefits arising from the proposed road and bridge works would benefit the community directly and indirectly well beyond the life of the Proposal."**

## SURFACE WATER, GROUNDWATER AND FLOODING

The Rocky Hill Coal Project is located within the Avon River catchment. A range of surface water and groundwater safeguards will be put in place to minimise any impacts.

- Clean water runoff will flow off site. Other runoff will go to a series of sediment dams where it will be detained to settle, tested and, if it meets ANZECC:2000 water quality guidelines, will be released into local waterways.
- Groundwater seepage and surface runoff within the open cut pits will be contained on site and used for coal washing and suppressing dust.
- A site water balance study has shown that during operations the mine will be unlikely to need to extract water from Waukivory Creek or the Avon River and will have capacity to store projected groundwater seepage and surface water inflows, even during the historically wettest periods.
- Existing extensive surface and groundwater monitoring programs will continue.

**The expert consultants found: "Assuming the implementation of all surface water mitigation and management measures proposed for the Site, it is envisaged that surface water would be appropriately managed with negligible impacts on the surrounding environment or downstream surface water users." "Impacts ... on flood flows and behaviour would be negligible."**



## AIR QUALITY

We know minimising dust and maintaining air quality is a major issue for the community, and it is a priority at the Rocky Hill Coal Project. We will be required to meet a number of strict health and amenity based air quality criteria.

Dispersion modelling has been carried out to quantify the impact of dust generating activities associated with the mine.

Measures to minimise impacts include:

- using best practice to suppress or collect dust
- use of a predictive meteorological forecasting system to determine

the likely risk of dust emissions and aid planning of the coming day's operations

- use of real-time air quality monitoring to show us if we are approaching a prescribed limit so we can adjust the mine's operations accordingly
- designing blasts to minimise dust impacts including delaying blasts if there are unfavourable climatic conditions.

We will continue to review our operations and investigate ways to reduce emissions, and work with neighbours to minimise any impacts.

**DID YOU KNOW?**



**AIR QUALITY**

To assist in the air quality investigations, we have been collecting background air quality information from seven dust deposition gauges, two high volume samplers, and two TEOMs which continuously monitor PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub> particles in the air. It is rare for a mine or EIS to measure PM<sub>2.5</sub> particles, i.e. particles less than 2.5 microns (a micron being one thousandth of a millimetre).

## COMMUNITY HEALTH

The potential impact of mining on the health of the community and our workers is just as important to us as it is to the community. In recognition of the concerns expressed during consultation, an extensive and conservative Health Risk Assessment (HRA) was commissioned as part of the EIS. The HRA involved three separate aspects, looking at concentration of any hazards, an exposure assessment and risk characterisation. It concluded

that the risks of health impacts at all receptors surrounding the Site and within the Gloucester township are within acceptable levels.

We then commissioned Associate Professor David McKenzie (Head of the Department of Respiratory and Sleep Disturbance Medicine at the Prince of Wales Hospital) to peer review the health risk assessment and relevant aspects of the air quality,

noise and blasting assessments. Assoc. Professor McKenzie recognised the conservatism of the health risk assessment in his review. He said:

**“The calculations in the Health Risk Assessment are based on conservative assumptions and interpretation of the worst case scenario in the modelling data. I conclude that the potential risk to health is very small and within acceptable levels.”**

## NOISE

Noise is an important issue and has been reflected in the design of the Project, equipment selection, operational sequencing, hours of operations and the proposed controls.

The three visibility and noise barriers, real-time noise monitoring as well as active site management measures such as using sound suppressed equipment will help us to minimise noise.

Our predictive meteorological forecasting system will provide updates

on weather conditions (such as wind) 24 to 48 hours in advance to help plan each day's mining operations.

Our real-time noise monitoring system will have automatic triggers to let us know if we are approaching limits so we can amend activities before issues arise.

The mine will need to comply with an extremely strict set of noise criteria. We will work with the potentially affected landowners to minimise noise and reduce impacts.

**The expert consultants found: “Noise levels will not exceed sleep disturbance criteria at privately-owned residences. Based on the medical literature concerning sleep quality and daytime performance, no resident would be adversely affected and there should be no clinically significant impact on sleep quality or quantity as a result of the Proposal.”**

## VISIBILITY

We recognise the scenic and visual amenity of the Stroud-Gloucester Valley and its importance to the community. To minimise any potential impacts, the mine design includes three vegetated visibility barriers which, together with GRL's ongoing strategic vegetation planting program, will shield the vast majority of mining activities. The progressive development and rehabilitation/revegetation of the post-mining landform will also help minimise any potential impacts.

Because the rail loop and train loading activities will be primarily below the natural ground level, people will be able to see far less of the Rail Load-out Facility than they used to see of the old Boral timber processing plant that was on the site until just recently.

The visibility barriers and a range of other lighting controls will also limit after dark visual impacts.

A detailed 3D modelling video and a series of photomontages have been developed to show the community how the mine will develop. They show views of the Project from various vantage points throughout the planned life of the mine. This enables the community to assess the visual impact and the effectiveness of the planned safeguards.



1. Rocky Hill 2. McKinleys Lane

These photos show modelled changes to views at various stages in the Project at the Grantham and Fairbairns Rd intersection.

The videos and views are on display at the Project Information Centre.

While the visibility and noise barriers are being constructed there will be short-term impacts for some residents. The western and northern visibility barrier seen by Forbesdale Estate residents will be substantially completed within 12 months and progressively rehabilitated.

**The expert consultants found: "Once the [western and northern] visibility barrier is complete, there would be no significant visibility of the mining operations" and "The final landform would be indistinguishable from the surrounding landscape for other than those familiar with it, and would be compatible with its landform, land use and character."**

## DID YOU KNOW?

### REHABILITATION ?

We have worked hard to design a final landform that will closely resemble the one prior to the development. The mine will not leave a final void (open pit). We will progressively rehabilitate the site to allow the speedy resumption of productive grazing and nature conservation land uses.

## DID YOU KNOW?

### TREE PLANTINGS ?

GRL has already planted more than 9,000 seedlings of locally occurring native species on some of its properties in the vicinity of the Project.

These plantings will help to soften any visual impacts if the mine is approved and, in time, also create or extend flora and fauna corridors throughout the local area.



Local resident and GRL employee Keith Burge inspects tree plantings.

## AGRICULTURE

The Rocky Hill Coal Project will demonstrate that mining and agriculture can co-exist. GRL is a farmer as well as a miner. The Rocky Hill Mine Site represents only one quarter of GRL's landholdings in Gloucester Shire. The company runs 500 head of cattle and works closely with the Speldon Partnership and other farmers.

A common misconception is that The Rocky Hill Mine site is located on prime agricultural land. Soil studies have shown that the land on which the mine will be located is predominantly Class 4 and 5 land. No prime (Class 1, 2 or 3) agricultural land will be disturbed by the Project.

Appropriate soil management practices (stripping, handling, stockpiling, erosion control and revegetation) will mean there will be minimal impact to soils within the Site and the land used for mining purposes can be progressively returned to agricultural production. Blasting operations and dust generation will be controlled and ensure there is no effect on livestock eating patterns, feed intake, production or behavioural activity.



This photo is of GRL owned land currently being used by the neighbouring dairy. This property is adjacent to the proposed visibility barrier and mine.

### DID YOU KNOW?



### AGRICULTURE

More agricultural land has been permanently lost to residential housing subdivisions in the vicinity of Gloucester in the past 15 years than will be temporarily lost from agricultural production as a consequence of the Rocky Hill Coal Project.

## GRL SECURES LOCAL DAIRY FUTURE

The Rocky Hill Coal Project is helping the dairy industry to prosper and grow in the region.

An agreement between GRL and the Speldon Partnership means their dairy will not only continue to operate but flourish. The Speldon Partnership now has access to nearly 250ha of neighbouring GRL land,

expanding the dairy's footprint and enabling investment in new equipment and technologies.

Given the more labour intensive nature of dairy farms, significantly more employment opportunities in agriculture will be generated than those lost from the temporary loss of GRL grazing land to mining activity.

## SOCIO ECONOMIC ASPECTS

A comprehensive, independent social and economic assessment was completed by a Hunter-based research company to identify the full range of potential issues and opportunities arising from the Project within the community. The analysis also looked at the economic

impacts on a state and national level. The Rocky Hill Coal Project's impacts on a range of areas including health, social infrastructure, housing, community sense of place, social cohesion and employment were all examined and are detailed in the EIS.

### DID YOU KNOW?



### FACTS ON DISTANCES

The closest mining activity from the residences in the Forbesdale Estate is the construction of a visibility and noise barrier along the western and northern sides of the open cuts. It will be between 1.2 and 2 km away from the residences in that estate.

The distance from the closest open cut pit from:

- residences in the Forbesdale Estate – between 1.7 to 2.5km
- residences in the Avon River and Thunderbolt Estates – between 1.9 to 2.9km
- Gloucester Hospital and High School – more than 5km.

## LOCAL JOBS AND INVESTMENT



The Rocky Hill Coal Project will help to create local jobs and provide a significant boost to Gloucester's economy. GRL has accepted all of the recommendations of an independent assessment to manage potential socio-economic impacts and maximise socio-economic benefits.

Exceeding expectations, more than 300 responses were received from local businesses and individuals to the advertisement placed in the *Gloucester Advocate* from people looking for work in our planned mining and agricultural enterprises. We are still accepting expressions of interest via our website. Although the majority came from the Gloucester area, we also received numerous contacts from former Gloucester residents wishing to return to the area.

We are committed to being a responsible and valued member of the community and will actively encourage workers and their families employed from outside the local area to relocate to Gloucester.

The Project will bring significant economic benefits, in addition to those arising from the previously announced Community Grants Program.

- Up to 100 construction jobs and up to 150 full-time equivalent jobs.
- Direct local spending of up to \$8 million a year into the local economy with a flow-on effect of up to \$18.5 million annually once

the mine is in full production. This would mean more than more than \$250 million to the local economy over the Project's life.

- More than \$4 million in additional rates revenue to Gloucester Shire Council over the life of the Project because mining land is subject to a rating more than 10 times higher than that of farming land.
- Extensive revenues and benefits to the state and national economies.

Much has been made of the impact of mining on tourism. GRL believes that mining and tourism can co-exist as can be seen in places such as Mudgee, Muswellbrook, Singleton and Gunnedah, as well as Carnarvon Gorge in Queensland. Research presented in the EIS shows that the mining sector in the Hunter is firmly underpinning the tourism sector, ensuring occupancy and flow-on expenditure, and helping to absorb fluctuations in the leisure tourism market. This has been observed in Gloucester. We will work with the local tourism industry to support its expansion.

**The expert consultants found: "Although a range of negative social and economic impacts could potentially occur, on balance, the socio-economic assessment has concluded there would be a net social and economic benefit associated with the Proposal."**

## DID YOU KNOW?



## COMMUNITY GRANTS



Employees from Gloucester Hospital with new equipment already donated by GRL.

GRL has committed to a generous Community Grants Program for the Gloucester area if the mine goes ahead.

GRL will donate 50 cents per tonne of product coal sold from the Rocky Hill Coal Project to a charitable trust. This is expected to generate between \$7 million and \$8 million over the life of the Project.

The trustees will ensure that the monies support initiatives and activities which are important to the community as a whole and provide benefits to the community both during and beyond the life of the mine.

In addition to the production related grant, GRL will also:

- sponsor up to three tertiary education scholarships annually in fields such as mining, engineering, agriculture and environmental science
- provide trade apprenticeships for local youth
- assist with the provision of enhanced medical services and facilities to the local area in consultation with local health professionals
- provide competency training and certification on mining related equipment to assist local men and women gain employment in mining or other related fields
- provide local training and employment for local people through its farming enterprises.

## PROPOSED HOURS OF OPERATION

**Mining and Coal Handling & Preparation Plant** - 7:00am and 10:00pm Monday to Saturday, excluding public holidays. Mining is also planned to occur at a reduced intensity until 4am, but only when

modelling and monitoring demonstrate all noise limits can be satisfied.

**Coal Despatch** - Determined by Australian Rail Track Corporation, but is likely to be one to three trains in any 24hr period at peak production.

## HOW WILL THE PROJECT BE ASSESSED?

The Rocky Hill Coal Project is classified as a State significant development. The Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, or the Planning Assessment Commission (under delegation) will assess the Project and approve or reject the application. A development consent will be subject to rigorous conditions to prevent, minimise and/or offset any environmental

impacts, set standards and measures for acceptable environmental performance and provide for ongoing environmental management, monitoring and reporting.

**We recognise the importance of stringent and rigorous conditions to all stakeholders and commit to meeting or exceeding all regulatory requirements.**

## WHAT IF THE PROJECT DOESN'T PROCEED?

Any development that generates jobs and prosperity also has some impacts and they have each been comprehensively addressed in the EIS. By working with the community and regulators, we will manage and minimise any adverse impacts to ensure net social and economic benefits to the Gloucester area. If the mine doesn't go ahead, the EIS reports that Gloucester will continue to experience:

- a small and decreasing population growth rate
- a continued exodus of people in their primary working years
- an increasing number of people not working relying on those working.

If the mine doesn't go ahead, residents will not benefit from the following opportunities, all of which would contribute to the town's long-term sustainability.

- Increased employment and associated flow-ons.
- The benefits arising from the Community Grants Program .
- A boost to the local economy of up to \$18.5 million a year and more than \$250 million over the mine's life.
- An increase in population growth rate.
- Additional rates revenue to Council.
- Road improvements such as a new Jacks Road Bridge at no cost to ratepayers.

## HAVE YOUR SAY



The Rocky Hill Coal Project design and the EIS reflect the extensive consultation GRL has undertaken with the community and other stakeholders to address environmental, social and economic issues.

The Department of Planning and Infrastructure has placed the Development Application, Environmental Impact Statement and other accompanying documents on public exhibition. They may be viewed at [www.majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au](http://www.majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au) and may also be inspected during business hours at:

- Department of Planning & Infrastructure, Information Centre, 23-33 Bridge Street, Sydney
- Gloucester Shire Council, 89 King Street, Gloucester
- Gloucester Library, 27 Denison Street, Gloucester
- Nature Conservation Council, Level 2, 5 Wilson Street, Newtown.

GRL has always strived to work with the community in developing this Project. It has established a **Project Information Centre** at 34 King Street Gloucester so people can come and ask a question or make a comment about the Project to GRL staff. The Centre will be open at various times throughout the public exhibition period and by appointment. Visit [www.rockyhillproject.com.au](http://www.rockyhillproject.com.au) for opening times as well as other information about the Project.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Further detail on the Rocky Hill Coal Project can be found on the Department of Planning and Infrastructure's website: [majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au](http://majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au). A copy of the supporting documentation can also be found on the Rocky Hill Coal Project website: [www.rockyhillproject.com.au](http://www.rockyhillproject.com.au), along with Information and Fact sheets, the Project timetable, Community Information including Community Consultative Committee meeting minutes and summaries from the Company's meteorological station, and a mechanism for you to provide feedback, comments and questions about the Project. This newsletter is printed on environmentally friendly paper.