

Malabar Coal lodges Environmental Impact Statement for proposed coal mine

Malabar Coal's Maxwell Project coal mine which would create 350 jobs and generate more than \$1 billion for the NSW economy.

Edward Boyd, The Daily Telegraph

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An Australian company has unveiled a plan to go underground to mine coal in the Hunter Valley in a compromise which would create hundreds of jobs and also protect the area's famed thoroughbred studs and farmland.

Multinational mining giant Anglo American tried four times to build an open cut coal mine at the same site near Muswellbrook. but was knocked back by the Planning Assessment Commission due to concerns over the noise, threat to air quality and visual impact the mine would create.

The Hunter Thoroughbred Breeders Association was vehemently opposed to an open cut mine, with world class thoroughbred studs Coolmore and Godolphin Woodlands both bordering the southern side of the proposed mine.



A view of the Coolmore Horse Stud back blocks; Maxwell's Underground Project is designed to appease the horse stud, farmers and other local residents. Picture: Peter Lorimer.

Anglo American gave up in 2017 and sold the site to Australian company Malabar Coal, which has lodged a 4600 page Environmental Impact Statement, which weighs 26kg, for the Maxwell Underground Project designed to appease the horse studs, farmers and residents.

Malabar says underground mining will result in the dust emissions representing less than 10 per cent of the emissions that were predicted for the previous open cut mine proposal, limited surface activities mean the noise levels will be indistinguishable from background noise, and farming can continue on Malabar-owned land above the underground mine.

The company will also place a cover over the coal conveyor to reduce dust, the mine entry road will be about 5km from the nearest neighbour, and the underground mining method removes the need for loud explosives.

Malabar's Maxwell Project is predicted to deliver 350 long term jobs, \$55 million in wages each year to the local economy, \$500 million to \$700 million each year in export income for NSW, and

an extra \$1 billion to \$1.25 billion over the life of the mine to the NSW government and local councils through royalties and taxes.

The proposed \$500 million coal mine will yield about 4.8 million tonnes of coal each year for the 26 years it operates.



Malabar says underground mining will result in the dust emissions representing less than 10 per cent of the emissions predicted for the previous open cut mine proposal. Picture: Supplied

“A top priority for the community is to ensure that the region has a vibrant and diverse economy that supports many different sectors,” Malabar chairman Wayne Seabrook he said.

“With that in mind, the Maxwell Project has been carefully designed to ensure that the community can enjoy the significant economic boost this project will create, without negatively impacting other local industries and land uses.”

Federal Labor MP Joel Fitzgibbon, who is the Member for Hunter and Opposition resources spokesman, told The Daily Telegraph he supports the proposal.

“Given its proximity to our thoroughbred studs the South Drayton open cut mine extension challenged the coal industry’s strongest supporters, even me,” he said.

“But I’m confident an underground mine can successfully co-exist with our thoroughbred breeders and I’m hopeful that more than 300 new coal mining jobs are on their way.”



The project is predicted to deliver 350 long-term jobs and \$55 million in wages each year to the local economy. Picture: Supplied

Mr Fitzgibbon said NSW planning minister Rob Stokes should have the final say on whether projects like this needed to declare ‘scope 3 emissions’ – emissions the coal makes when burned in another country.

“This would be a good time for the NSW government to make it clear that issues like scope 3 emissions and intergenerational equity are matters for elected representatives,” he said.

“We’ve seen too much mission creep from non-elected bodies within the planning approvals processes of late.”

“On these important questions, the buck should stop with a minister accountable to the people for his or her actions.”

Coolmore and Godolphin Woodlands were approached for comment.

The mine application by Malabar comes after Mr Stokes declared a proposed \$589 million liquefied natural gas import terminal at Newcastle “critical state significant infrastructure.”

The terminal could supply up to 80 per cent of NSW’s gas needs and if approved, could be operational by 2022-23.



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