

The Wyong Areas Coal Joint Venture is seeking development consent for the Wallarah 2 Coal Project located northwest of Wyong, NSW.

The proposal includes:

- A full-time workforce of 300 for the operation of a deep underground longwall mine extracting up to 5 Million tonnes of export quality thermal coal per year
- Product coal being transported to the Port of Newcastle by rail
- Tooheys Road Site (see map) comprising a drift portal, stockpiles, water and gas management facilities, small office buildings, workshop, coal handling infrastructure and services connections
- Buttonderry Site (see map) comprising offices, bathhouse, personnel access to the mine and ventilation shafts
- Western Ventilation Shaft Site in the Wyong State Forest
- An inclined tunnel or 'drift' from the surface at the Tooheys Road Site to the coal seam deep beneath the Buttonderry Site

Since 2011, the Project has been undergoing assessment as a State Significant Development under Part 4 of the Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979. In 2014 the Department of Planning's Environmental Assessment Report for the Project concluded that *"the project's benefits outweigh its potential impacts and it is therefore in the public interest"*.

The Planning Assessment Commission published its Review Report in June 2014 following a public hearing. The Project was later the subject of legal proceedings in the NSW Land and Environment Court which held that insofar as the Development Application is made in respect of land owned by the Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC), the Application cannot be determined until the NSW Aboriginal Land Council has consented to the making of the application.

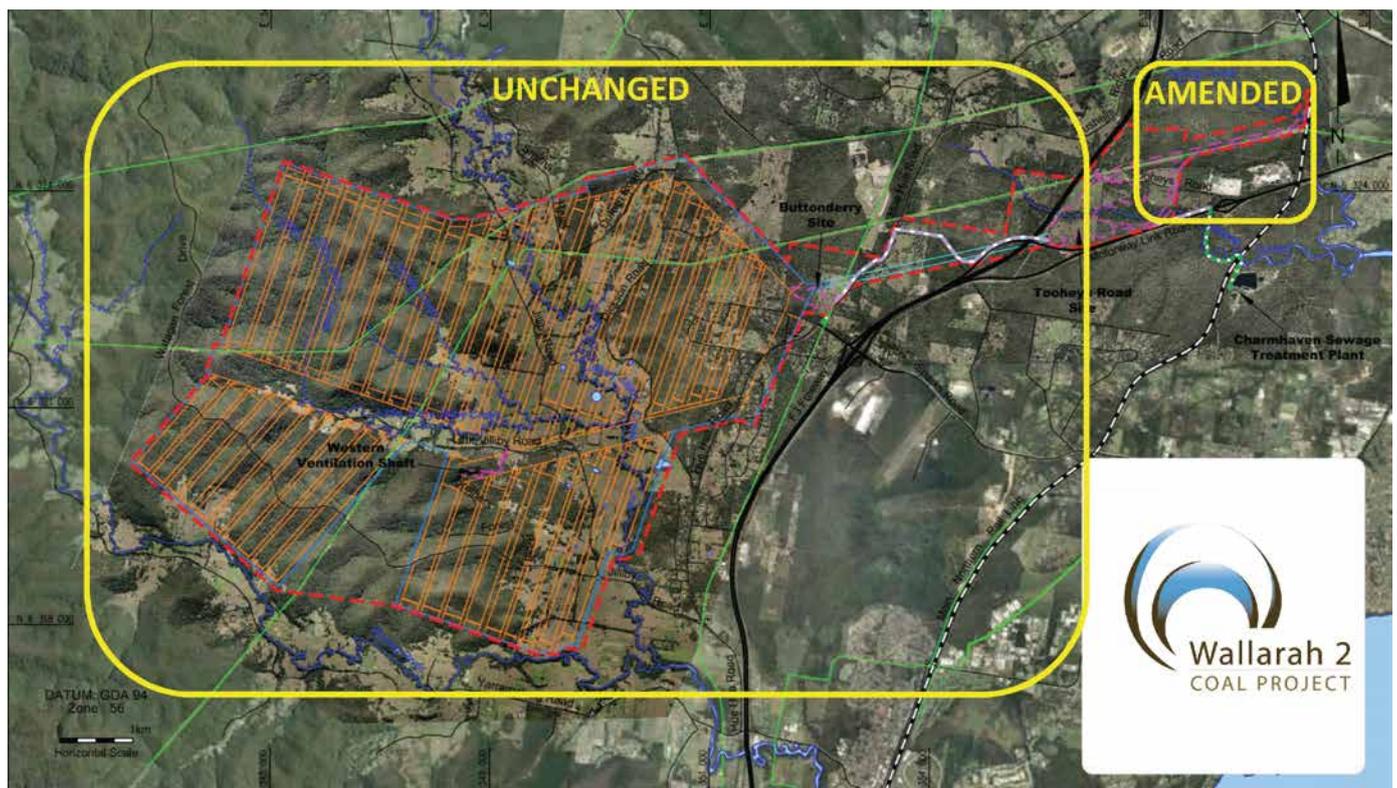
Despite the efforts of Wyong Coal to negotiate an agreeable outcome, the consent of the NSW Aboriginal Land Council has not been forthcoming.

As a result Wyong Coal has redesigned the coal transportation infrastructure and sewer connection for the Project to avoid Aboriginal land. These proposed changes to the Project are the subject of the Amendment Application lodged in July 2016.

All other aspects of the proposal remain unchanged:

- Proposed mining area, mining methods and maximum production rate
- Coal handling and rail loading methods
- Other surface infrastructure
- Construction schedule
- Operational and construction workforce and capital investment value.

"All other aspects of the proposal remain unchanged."



The Amendment avoids the need to develop infrastructure on land owned by the Darkinjung LALC, thereby removing the requirement for the consent of the NSW Aboriginal Land Council.

The planning approach for the Amended Project involved:

- Careful consideration of all alternatives in facilities siting and operations
- Minimising land disturbance and community impacts
- Protecting air quality, noise and visual amenity, especially in Blue Haven
- Avoiding private lands while maintaining existing access to nearby properties, and
- Ongoing consultation with landowners, agencies and the broader community.

“The Amendment proposes to remove the rail loop, relocate the rail spur to beside the existing rail corridor, extend the conveyor system and relocate a sewer pipeline.”

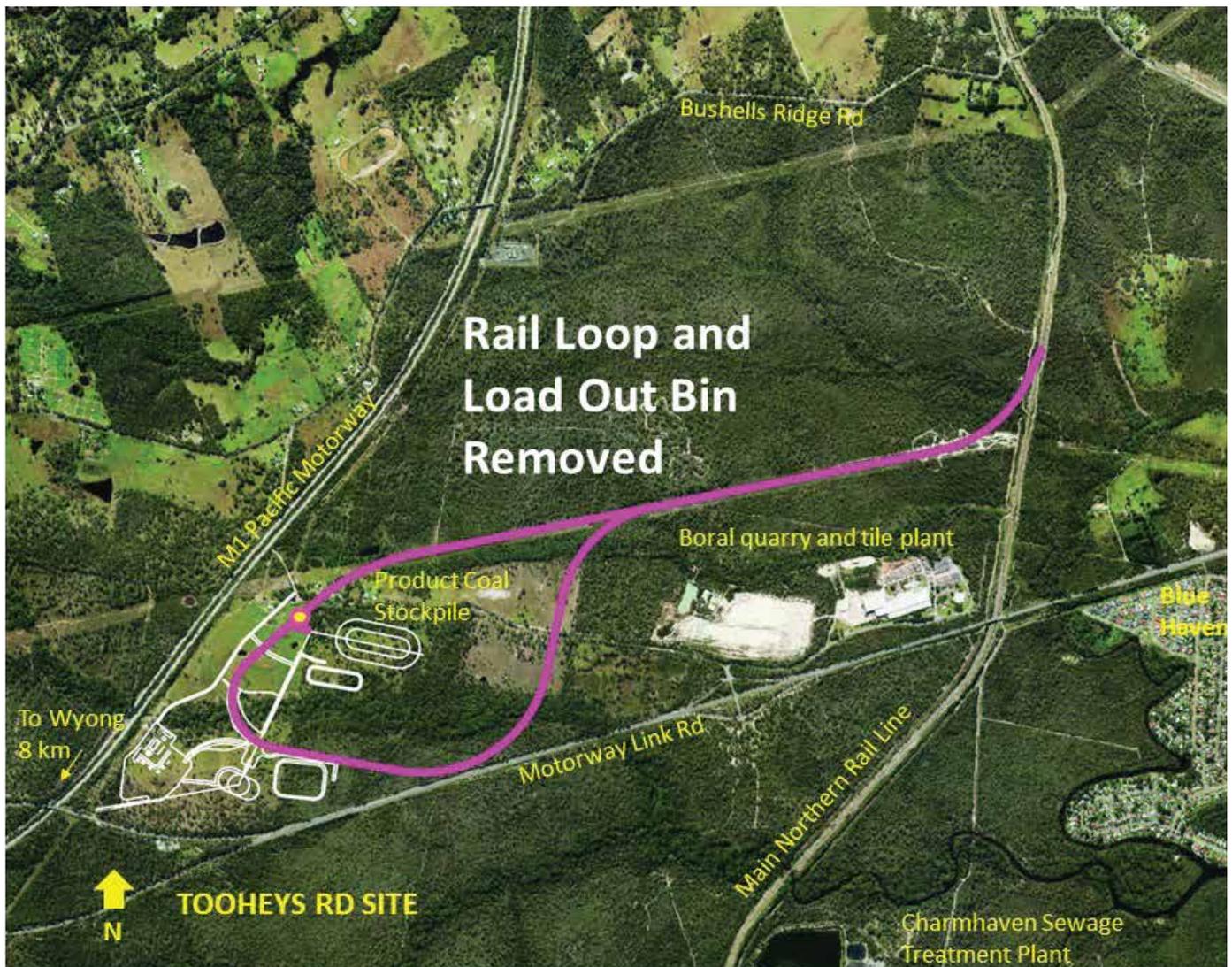
Details

The Amendment makes three changes to the original proposal (see maps):

- Removal of the previously proposed rail loop and relocation of the rail spur and train load out facility to along the eastern side of the Main Northern Rail Line
- Extension of the conveyor system to deliver product coal from the stockpile to the new location of the train load out facility, and
- Realignment of sewer connection.

Relocated Rail Spur

To avoid Aboriginal land, the 2.3 km long rail spur has been relocated to a Crown Road (Nikko Road) along the eastern side of the Main Northern Rail Line to north of the Motorway Link Rd. The train load out facility on the rail spur is 1.1 km north of the Motorway Link Road Bridge. (The rail loop originally proposed will not be required.)





Conveyor System Extension

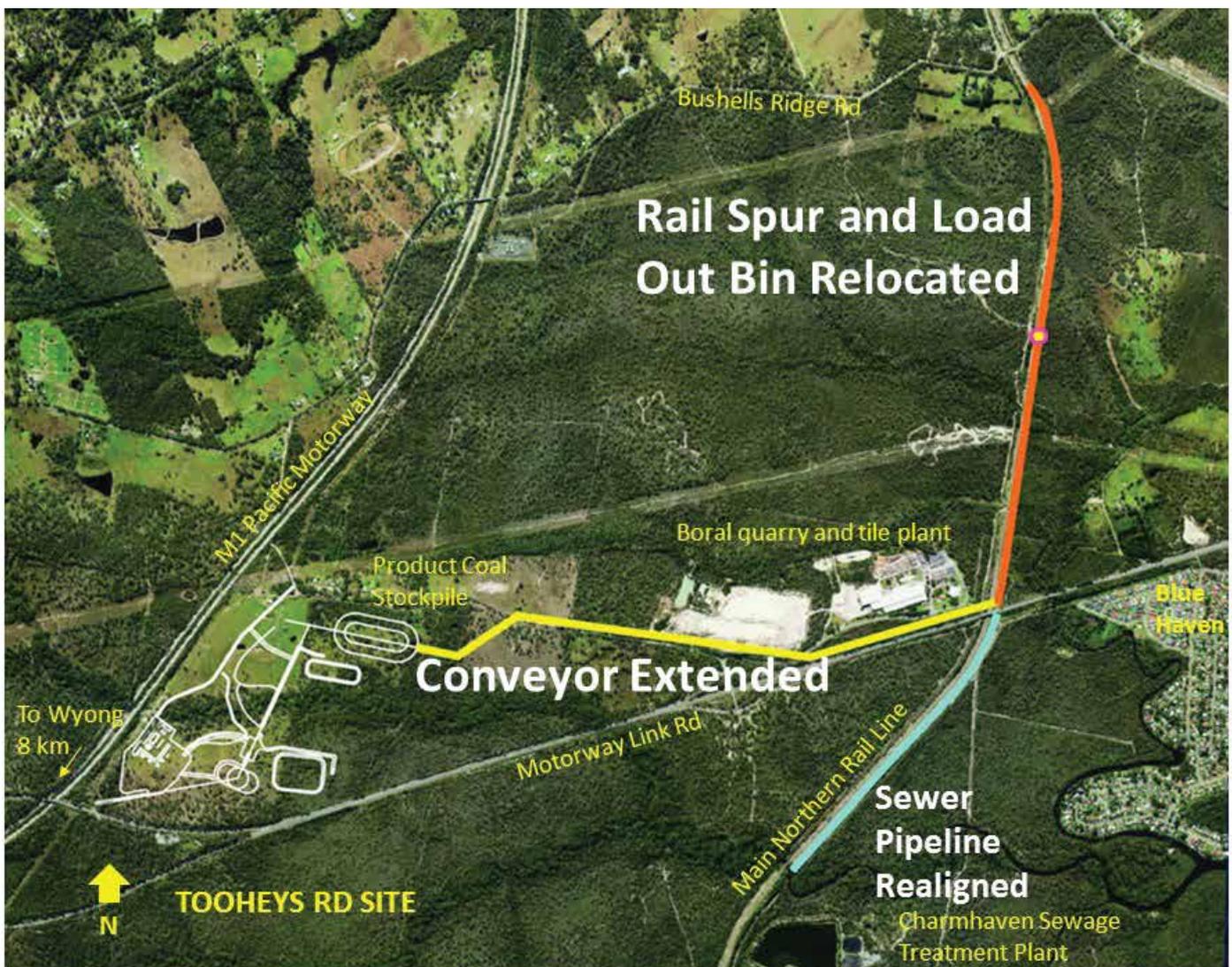
The extended conveyor system will transfer product coal to the relocated train load out facility. Firstly, an east-west aligned overland conveyor (2.3 km long) will transport coal from the product stockpile to a transfer station adjacent to the Main Northern Rail Line. This station will then transfer the coal from the overland conveyor to the bin feed conveyor which runs south to north for 1.1 km alongside the existing rail corridor. None of the revised infrastructure will be on (non-Wyong Coal owned) private land. Existing physical and legal access to privately-owned lots with frontage along Nikko Road will be retained.

In summary, the Amendment will:

- Avoid direct land use conflicts with neighbouring land owners and maintain access
- Significantly reduce land area to be disturbed at the Tooheys Road Site
- Reduce the ecological impacts and interactions with streams and riparian vegetation

Impacts and Benefits

- Comply with noise and air quality criteria for residences in Blue Haven and implement noise mitigation measures at affected residences (in consultation with the relevant landowners)
- Require fewer train movements than previously proposed
- Result in limited visual impacts, with no impacts on residences in Blue Haven
- Have no additional impacts on Aboriginal heritage values
- Provide net production and employment benefits to NSW of \$485 million (present value)
- Provides significant ongoing contributions to the regional economy, including 300 direct jobs and over 550 indirect flow-on jobs.





“The Amendment will reduce land disturbance at the Tooheys Road site by 29% and avoid two rail crossings of Wallarah Creek.”

Flooding

A flood study assessed the impacts of the relocated rail spur’s crossings of Spring Creek and its tributaries. It demonstrates that only negligible increases in 1 in 100 year flood levels will occur at the two rail spur bridge crossings which are to be located immediately adjacent to similar existing rail bridges. The freeboard to the existing rail infrastructure will remain adequate.

Construction and operations will be undertaken in accordance with a detailed Erosion and Sediment Plan and Water Management Plan.

Air Quality

The air quality model previously developed for the Project was revised to reflect the proposed changes to the coal transportation infrastructure. It confirmed that the air quality surrounding the Amended Project will comply with all relevant regulatory criteria during construction and operation (including incremental and cumulative TSP, PM10 and PM2.5).

Dust control measures will be a key focus of the Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Management Plan for the Project to ensure impacts are minimised.

“Noise levels and air quality at Blue Haven will be protected.”

Noise

Acoustic studies indicated that, due to the relocation of the train load out facility and the removal of the rail loop, residences to the north, south and west of the Tooheys Road Site are expected to experience lower noise levels than under the original proposal.

The Amended Project incorporates numerous noise mitigation measures. Modelling confirms that compliance is achieved for all relevant noise criteria for the Blue Haven area. Blue Haven is at least 1.1 km from the train load out facility and is separated from the proposed infrastructure by the elevated Motorway Link Road and dense intervening vegetation.

A Construction Noise and Vibration Management Plan will be developed in consultation with the small number of nearby landowners to manage potential impacts during the construction phase.

Wyang Coal will prepare a Noise Management Plan for the operational phase of the Project which will include noise controls and acoustic treatments for relevant nearby residences to minimise potential impacts. Wyong Coal will consult with these landowners and offer to apply appropriate acoustic treatments in accordance with the relevant Government guideline.

Ecology

The Amendment will reduce the land disturbance associated with the Tooheys Road Site from 89 ha to 63 ha, a reduction of 29%. It will reduce impact on two of the six Endangered Ecological Communities (EEC) at the Tooheys Road Site: disturbance to the Swamp Sclerophyll Forest EEC will be reduced by 78% (from 2.85 ha to 0.63 ha) while a smaller reduction in disturbance will benefit the River-flat Eucalyptus Forest EEC.

The reduced disturbance to native vegetation will maintain habitat for flora and fauna species, including threatened and migratory species.

“The Amendment avoids impacts to 11 ha of native vegetation and stream riparian zones, benefiting ecological communities and species as well as Wallarah Creek.”

Removal of the previously proposed rail loop avoids the removal of 0.45 ha of riparian vegetation required for crossings of Wallarah Creek and its tributaries. By relocating the rail spur to be immediately adjacent to the Main Northern Rail Line and its existing rail bridges over the watercourses, impacts on Spring Creek are also minimised.

The reduced area of disturbance means that the previously prepared Biodiversity Offset Strategy to compensate for residual ecological impacts will now result in the offset ratios for all vegetation communities and habitats being further increased.

Rail

To accommodate the proposed changes to the rail spur, alternate train configurations have been adopted for the Amended Project, with more wagons per train requiring fewer train cycles (down to 3 to 4 per day). There will be sufficient network capacity to accommodate the train movements associated with the Amended Project without the need for additional rail infrastructure. As there will be fewer daily train cycles, the predicted impacts on level crossings will also be reduced.

To ensure that the Amended Project will not have any safety implications on the rail network, the proponent will prepare a Signalling Functional Specification to the satisfaction of Transport for NSW, RailCorp and Sydney Trains.

“Alternative train configurations will result in fewer train cycles - 3 to 4 per day.”



Aboriginal Heritage

Registered Aboriginal stakeholders were involved in the archaeological survey which did not identify any further Aboriginal sites or areas that are likely to contain subsurface archaeological deposits. Therefore, the Amendment will not result in any impacts to additional Aboriginal items.

The removal of the rail loop from the Tooheys Road Site will reduce potential impacts to open site WC-OS2 which was identified during previous archaeological studies.

Wyong Coal has committed to the preparation of an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management Plan.

Visual

The visual impacts of the new infrastructure elements proposed in the Amendment were assessed, including conveyors and gantries, transfer stations, the train load out facility and noise barrier.

These structures are only expected to be visible to motorists on the Motorway Link Road and Tooheys Road and train passengers on the Main Northern Rail Line. They will not be visible from any key pedestrian areas. Due to the speeds that motorists and train passengers will be travelling when passing the proposed structures, the potential durations of view will be very short. Lighting will also be carefully managed. The potential visual impacts are considered to range from low to moderate.

Economic Benefits

The potential economic benefits that will be provided by the Amended Project were assessed through a cost-benefit analysis and local effects analyses.

“Wyong Coal remains committed to a target of 70% local employment, or 210 direct locally recruited employees.”

The cost-benefit analysis estimates that the Amended Project will generate net production and employment benefits of \$485 million (present value). As the benefits exceed the value of residual environmental costs, the Amended Project is considered to be desirable from an economic efficiency perspective.

The employment and expenditure associated with the Project will generate significant economic activity within the regional economy. When flow-on effects are considered, the contribution of the Amended Project to the regional economy every year will include up to:

- \$593 M in annual direct and indirect regional output or business turnover
- \$342 M in annual direct and indirect regional value-added
- \$69 M in annual direct and indirect household income
- 853 direct and indirect jobs.

“Economic modelling indicates that the Amended Project will generate up to 853 direct and indirect jobs in the region throughout the life of the project.”

Wyong Coal also remains committed to a target of 70% local employment, which equates to 210 direct locally recruited employees. Another of our committed targets is to have at least 10% indigenous employment, which equates to a minimum of 30 indigenous employees during the operational phase. The construction phase of the Amended Project will also generate significant contributions to the regional economy.

Justification

The Amendment will result in a number of positive environmental outcomes. The reduction in the extent of disturbance will reduce impacts to ecological, hydrological and cultural heritage values. Air quality and noise modelling demonstrates that amenity impacts will be able to be managed in accordance with the relevant standards.

The Amendment also allows for the economic and employment benefits of the Project to be realised. Significant direct and indirect jobs will be generated within the locality, which experiences higher than average unemployment rates. The Project will generate revenues in the form of royalties, company tax and voluntary contributions, which are used by governments to fund infrastructure projects and services.

Without the Amendment, the Project will not be able to proceed in its current form and as such, these potential benefits may be foregone.

Due to the positive environmental outcomes and economic benefits that will be facilitated by the Amendment, there is considered to be sufficient justification for the consent authority to accept this amendment to the Development Application.

The Project (as originally proposed) was subject to a review by the Planning Assessment Commission, which concluded that *“If the recommendations concerning improved strategies to avoid, mitigate or manage the predicted impacts of the project are adopted, there is merit in allowing the project to proceed”*.

In summary, the Amended Project will provide significant economic benefits and requires less land disturbance than the original proposal.

To view the full amendment go to majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au