



# **STATEMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS**

**for the**

## **PROPOSED CANYON EXTENSION**

**to the**

## **WHITEHAVEN COAL MINE**

**December 2004**

**Whitehaven Coal Mining Limited**  
**Statement of Environmental Effects**  
**for the**  
**Proposed Canyon Extension**  
**to the**  
**Whitehaven Coal Mine**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Statement of Environmental Effects has been prepared in support of an application by Whitehaven Coal Mining Limited (WCM) for a southerly extension of the existing Whitehaven Coal Mine within its existing mining lease, ML 1471. The application is to be assessed under Part 2 of Schedule 3 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation, 2000.

The Whitehaven Coal Mine, located approximately 30 km north-west of Gunnedah and 16 km east-south-east of Boggabri in the Gunnedah Coalfields of NSW, commenced operations in early 2000 and is the only operating mine in the Gunnedah Coalfield.

The proposed Canyon extension, which has been precipitated by a greater than expected demand for Whitehaven coal by both domestic and overseas customers, the increased demand for coal in general and the upward movement in coal prices, would yield approximately 2.4 Mt Run-of-Mine (ROM) coal and extend the life of the Whitehaven Coal Mine by approximately 2.5 years, that is, until mid to late 2008.

The area of disturbance associated with the proposed Canyon extension would approximate 50 ha, of which approximately 44 ha would be subject to open cut mining, 2 ha would be disturbed to permit final void reprofiling and up to 4 ha would be disturbed to enable the relocation of some existing facilities from their current position towards the northern limit of the existing mine. The additional area of disturbance would, however, be partially offset by a 22 ha reduction in the extent of approved disturbance required at the existing mine which has been achieved through improved overburden management techniques, refinements to the mine plan and the delayed relocation of mine support facilities.

With the exception of the aerial increase in mining, and the relocation of the ROM coal pad, coal processing area, coal bin and office facilities approximately 900 m south of their current locations, all other operational aspects, eg the method and scale of mining, equipment and hours of operations, waste management, infrastructure and services, rate and method of product coal transportation and post-mining landform rehabilitation techniques would remain materially unchanged from those currently employed at the existing Whitehaven Coal Mine.

The existing safeguards / ameliorative measures, management procedures and monitoring programmes as outlined in the various management plans applicable to the existing mine, each of which has been shown to be effective in minimizing adverse impacts, would be extended to cover all aspects of the proposed Canyon extension.

In order to compensate for the disturbance required to permit the development of the Canyon extension (of which approximately 37 ha comprises open woodland), reverse the historic trend of native vegetation loss and promote habitat conductivity and connectivity, WCM would establish native bushland on the areas of the post mining landform within the Canyon extension, exclude grazing from the majority of its freehold land within ML 1471 to encourage the regeneration of native vegetation, and undertake enrichment plantings over approximately 56 ha of open grassland.

Assessments of the proposed Canyon extension with respect to Aboriginal Heritage, Flora, Fauna, Air Quality and Noise were undertaken by specialist consultancies.

These assessments concluded:

- there are no cultural heritage impediments to the proposed development;
- the proposed extension would not result in any significant impact to Threatened flora species, Endangered Ecological Communities, Endangered Flora Populations or critical habitat, nor to any listed Threatened fauna species, populations or communities;
- the proposed activities would satisfy all appropriate goals with respect to air quality, ie deposited dust, PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub> and would not represent a significant contribution to greenhouse gas emissions;
- with the exception of “Broadwater”, the project specific noise goals would be satisfied at all nearby non-project related residences under calm and prevailing conditions. At “Broadwater”, the operational noise levels may exceed the night-time criterion by 2 dB(A) when mining operations are being undertaken at the southern extent of the Canyon North area (under a prevailing east-north-east wind) and by 1 dB(A) during the evening when operating at the western extremity of the Canyon West area (under a prevailing east-north-east wind). However, an exceedance of up to 2 dB(A) is unlikely to be noticeable by most people.

The proposed Canyon extension would have a number of positive direct and indirect socio-economic benefits to the local community including continued provision and promotion of local employment, injection of some \$2.5 M annually into the local economy by way of salaries and wages paid to mine employees and the indirect benefits which would accrue through WCM’s continued support of local businesses and service providers, local community and charitable groups.