

Vickery Coal Project

Environmental
Impact
Statement

SECTION 3

CONSULTATION AND
COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

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3 CONSULTATION AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

This section describes the consultation undertaken prior to and during the preparation of this EIS, including a summary of the issues raised by stakeholders. Where relevant, references are provided to the EIS sections and/or specialist appendices where the issues are considered and addressed.

3.1 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CONSULTATION

3.1.1 Objectives

The level of consultation undertaken during the preparation of this EIS is considered to be in accordance with the DGRs (Attachment 1) and is adequate and appropriate for a State Significant Project under Part 4 of the EP&A Act.

Consultation conducted during the preparation of this EIS has provided the opportunity to identify issues of concern or interest to stakeholders and to consider these issues in this EIS.

3.1.2 State Government Agencies

Consultation with key NSW State Government agencies in relation to the Project commenced prior to submission of the Preliminary Environmental Assessment in November 2011. Whitehaven continues to consult with relevant State Government agencies on a regular basis in relation to the Project as well as its existing mines in the region.

Department of Planning and Infrastructure

An initial meeting was held with DP&I representatives in September 2011 to provide a Project briefing and to discuss the EIS and approvals process prior to lodging the Preliminary Environmental Assessment.

The Preliminary Environmental Assessment was lodged with the DP&I in November 2011 and the DGRs were signed by the Director-General of the DP&I on 19 January 2012.

A Planning Focus Meeting (PFM) was organised by the DP&I and took place on 1 December 2011 in Gunnedah. The PFM also included a site inspection.

As the environmental impact assessment of the Project progressed, an update meeting was held with the DP&I on 13 June 2012 to discuss a number of key Project-related issues including:

- the Kamilaroi Highway overpass including:
 - design and location of the overpass (Section 2.6.3);
 - assessment of potential traffic noise impacts and the relevant noise impact assessment criteria (Section 4.6.2); and
 - interaction between the existing Whitehaven CHPP Development Consent and the proposed Project, including potential need for a modification to accommodate the increased trucking rate;
- overview of the EIS studies and details of the specialist consultants contributing to the EIS sections (Sections 1.3 and 1.4);
- addressing cumulative noise and dust emissions, including the Vickery South project (Sections 4.6 and 4.7, and Attachment 4);
- flora and fauna baseline survey results (Sections 4.9.1 and 4.10.1);
- potential impacts on agricultural resources and the agricultural impact assessment (Section 4.3); and
- the general EIS consultation program.

A meeting was also held with the DP&I and the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) in Armidale on 23 August 2012 to discuss the preliminary noise and air quality results.

Another meeting was held with the DP&I on 24 September 2011 to present the key findings of the biological surveys and assessments and to discuss the proposed biodiversity offset strategy for the Project. Representatives from the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) also attended the meeting.

In addition to the above, numerous discussions and communications were conducted with the DP&I during the preparation of this EIS.

NSW Environment Protection Authority and Office of Environment and Heritage

The EPA is consulted regularly as part of the operational management of Whitehaven's existing Tarrawonga and Rocglen Coal Mines, mainly in relation to the existing EPLs for these mines.

A meeting was initially held with the EPA in Armidale on 20 June 2012 to provide a Project briefing, including a discussion on the environmental impact assessment and specialist study program, with particular emphasis on the noise and air quality assessments. The discussion included the following:

- refinements to the Project since the Preliminary Environmental Assessment was lodged in November 2011;
- use of the 10th percentile noise modelling methodology by Wilkinson Murray (Section 4.6.2);
- assessment criteria and application of the *NSW Industrial Noise Policy (INP)* (EPA, 2000) to the evaluation of noise at the proposed Kamilaroi Highway overpass (Section 4.6.2);
- consideration of dust generation from local unsealed roads (Section 4.7.2);
- retention of final voids and pit lakes (Section 5); and
- key findings of the groundwater, surface water, biodiversity and visual studies, (Appendices A, B, E and H, respectively).

A second meeting was held with the EPA and the DP&I on 23 August 2012 to discuss the preliminary noise and air quality results, in particular:

- use of the proposed integrated pro-active noise management system to minimise noise impacts during night-time, especially under adverse weather conditions (Section 2.8.1);
- predicted noise levels in the vicinity of the Kamilaroi Highway overpass (Section 4.6.2); and
- identification of private and Company-owned residences potentially impacted by dust associated with the Project (Section 4.7.2).

The OEH's comments and specific input to the Project DGRs were documented in a letter dated 16 December 2011 (Heritage Branch, OEH) and in email correspondence to the DP&I in December 2011. A copy of the correspondence from government agencies and councils is attached to the DGRs (Attachment 1).

A meeting was held with the OEH in Gunnedah on 24 September 2014 (with the DP&I) to discuss a number of key issues including:

- refinements to the Project since the Preliminary Environmental Assessment was lodged in November 2011;
- key findings of the flora and fauna surveys and assessments conducted within the Project area and the proposed biodiversity offset area; and
- the proposed biodiversity offset strategy for the Project.

Key issues raised by the OEH at the meeting included:

- biodiversity, native vegetation, threatened species, and biodiversity offsets (Sections 4.9 and 4.10);
- rehabilitation of the final voids (Section 5); and
- actions that would be taken to avoid or mitigate impacts or compensate for unavoidable impacts (Sections 4, 5 and 7).

Whitehaven met with representatives from the OEH Inland Flood Unit and the NSW Office of Water (NOW) in Tamworth on 15 June 2012 and again on 12 September 2012. A summary of the items discussed at these meetings is provided below under the heading 'Department of Primary Industries'.

An information package describing the findings of the Non-Aboriginal Heritage Assessment was provided to the OEH Heritage Branch on 3 October 2012.

Consultation undertaken with the OEH during the preparation of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment is summarised in Appendix I.

Department of Primary Industries

The DPI, including the NOW, the Aquaculture, Conservation and Marine Parks Branch of the DPI; and the DPI Office of Agricultural Sustainability & Food Security were consulted during the preparation of this EIS. A summary of the consultation is provided below.

NSW Office of Water

The NOW's comments and specific input to the Project DGRs were documented in their letter dated 11 January 2012. A copy of the letter is attached to the DGRs (Attachment 1).

A meeting was initially held with the NOW in Tamworth on 15 June 2012 to provide a Project briefing, including background to the previous Vickery Coal Mine operations, and to discuss the scope and data upon which the Groundwater Assessment and Surface Water Assessment would be based. Representatives from the Namoi Catchment Management Authority (CMA) and the OEH Inland Flood Unit also attended the meeting.

A second meeting and presentation of the key findings of the groundwater and surface water assessments was made to the NOW on 12 September 2011. The meeting was attended and presented by the groundwater and surface water specialists (i.e. Dr Noel Merrick and Steve Perrens, respectively), as well as representatives from the OEH Inland Flood Unit.

These meetings were used to discuss the following:

- existing groundwater/geological data (i.e. exploration drill holes, regional geology mapping, NOW Pinneena database, groundwater monitoring programs);
- desktop review and Project bore census results;
- groundwater investigation program (i.e. core testwork, vibrating wire and nested piezometer installations and shallow alluvial drill holes);
- regional groundwater model extent and layers;
- transient groundwater model calibration (i.e. from 2006 to 2011);
- groundwater model predictive runs for the life of the mine and post-mine recovery analysis (Project-only and cumulative);
- proposed approach to groundwater licensing under the *Water Sharing Plan for the Upper and Lower Namoi Groundwater Sources 2003* (and *Water Sharing Plan for the NSW Murray Darling Basin Porous Rock Groundwater Sources 2011*);
- proposed design of the Project Water Management System including diversion of clean water, protection of riparian zones, containment of dirty water and management of overburden runoff;
- flood modelling for the MIA and the Kamilaroi Highway overpass areas;
- site water balance considerations and results;
- potential impacts on downstream surface water resources during operations and post-closure, including the final void recovery analysis; and
- mitigation strategies and the proposed Project Water Management System.

Whitehaven also consulted separately with the NOW during the preparation of this EIS in relation to applying for and obtaining relevant groundwater monitoring licences for the groundwater investigation program works.

Key issues raised by the NOW at the various meetings were generally consistent with the comments and input to the Project DGRs documented in the letter dated 11 January 2012 (Attachment 1). In summary, these included:

- consideration of the objects and requirements of the NSW *Water Act, 1912* and the NSW *Water Management Act, 2000* (Attachment 5 and Appendices A and B);
- consideration of the relevant rules in the water sharing plans applicable to the Project (Attachment 5 and Appendices A and B);
- consideration of relevant State Government natural resource management policies (Attachments 3 and 5 and Appendices A and B);
- details of the purpose, location and expected annual extraction volumes of all proposed groundwater extraction (Section 4.4. and Appendix A);
- adequate baseline monitoring for calibration of models and to verify predictive assessments, and identification of potential impacts on groundwater resources, adjacent licensed water users and groundwater dependent ecosystems (Sections 4.4 and 4.9 and Appendix A);
- identification and assessment of surface watercourses and associated riparian vegetation that may be affected by the Project, including remediation and rehabilitation strategies for the long-term integrity of watercourses to be disturbed (Sections 2.9.1, 4.5, 4.9 and Appendix B);
- site water demands, including water management infrastructure and vehicles that supply water to site (Section 2.9.1 and Appendix B);

- threshold limits, mitigation strategies and/or contingency measures to address potential impacts on groundwater and surface water resources, during operations and post-mining (Sections 4.4 and 4.5, and Appendices A and B); and
- justification and detailed modelling of the proposed final landform with regard to minimising the impact on local and regional groundwater and surface water systems (Sections 4.4, 4.5 and 5, and Appendices A and B).

Aquaculture, Conservation and Marine Parks Branch

Comments and specific input to the Project DGRs from the Aquaculture, Conservation and Marine Parks Branch of the DPI were documented in a letter dated 15 December 2011. A copy of the letter is attached to the DGRs (Attachment 1).

A meeting was held with the Aquaculture, Conservation and Marine Parks Branch of the DPI in Tamworth on 20 June 2012 to provide a Project briefing, and to describe the environmental studies that have been undertaken (including the aquatic ecology, surface water and biodiversity studies).

Key issues raised by the Aquaculture, Conservation and Marine Parks Branch of the DPI at the meeting were generally consistent with the comments and input to the Project DGRs documented in the letter dated 15 December 2011 (Attachment 1). In summary, these included:

- an aquatic ecological environmental assessment of the area which may be directly or indirectly affected by the Project, including quantification of the extent of aquatic and riparian habitat removal and detailed maps showing the proposed realignment of waterways within the Project area (Sections 4.4, 4.5 and 4.10 and Appendices A, B and E);
- threatened aquatic species assessment (Appendix E);
- consideration of the potential impacts of altered hydrological conditions on associated aquatic and riparian ecosystems such as floodplain wetlands and riparian vegetation (Sections 4.5, 4.9 and 4.10 and Appendices B and E); and
- assessment of potential impacts on surface water and groundwater hydrology, erosion and sedimentation, and their associated impacts on aquatic ecology (Section 4 and Appendices A, B and E).

Office of Agricultural Sustainability & Food Security

Comments and specific input to the Project DGRs from the Office of Agriculture, Sustainability & Food Security were documented in a letter dated 8 March 2012. A copy of the letter is attached to the DGRs (Attachment 1).

A meeting was held with the Office of Agriculture, Sustainability & Food Security in Orange on 20 July 2012 to provide a Project briefing, and to describe the environmental studies that have been undertaken (including the soil surveys, land capability, agricultural suitability and productivity evaluations).

Key issues raised by the Office of Agriculture, Sustainability & Food Security at the meeting and in the letter dated 8 March 2012 (Attachment 1) included:

- identification of agricultural resources and/or enterprises in the local area, with particular reference to highly productive alluvial soils that may be impacted directly or indirectly by the Project (Section 4.3 and Appendix G);
- descriptive rehabilitation goals relating to land use, soil resources and agricultural productivity, including depth to soil horizons, livestock carrying capacity and total areas of agricultural land classification classes (Sections 4.3 and 5 and Appendix G);
- strategic regional land use planning and identification of strategic agricultural land (Section 4.3 and Appendix G); and
- local and regional agricultural productivity and gross margins and pre-mining and post-mining economic considerations (Sections 4.3 and 4.15, and Appendices G and K).

Division of Resources and Energy (within the Department of Trade and Investment, Regional Infrastructure and Services)

The DRE is consulted regularly with regard to the rehabilitation and care and maintenance of the Vickery and Canyon Coal Mines, in particular the conditions of CL 316 and AUTH 406 (administered by the DRE).

Whitehaven presented the Conceptual Project Development Plan to representatives of the DRE on 5 September 2011, prior to lodging the Preliminary Environmental Assessment with the DP&I.

The DRE comments and specific input to the Project DGRs were documented in a letter dated 20 December 2011. A copy of the letter is attached to the DGRs (Attachment 1).

In summary, the issues raised by the DRE were in relation to:

- mining titles (Section 6);
- rehabilitation and mine closure, including proposed rehabilitation objectives, consideration of final void and emplacement options, final land use, performance standards and completion criteria, monitoring and research, and post-closure maintenance (Section 5);
- existing planning consent for the Whitehaven CHPP (Section 6 and Attachment 4); and
- disposal of Project fine rejects material (tailings) (Sections 2, 5, and Attachment 4).

A meeting was held with representatives of the DRE and the DP&I on 9 March 2012 to provide a Project update and to discuss a number of key issues including:

- final landform design concepts and justification for the proposed coal transport and processing infrastructure (Sections 5 and 6); and
- management of cumulative impacts associated with the Project and potential development of the Vickery South deposit, including the potential for sterilisation of coal between the two areas (i.e. barrier coal) (Sections 4 and 6, and Attachment 4).

An update on the Project was provided to the DRE on 10 October 2012 through the provision of an information package. The DRE did not have any further comments on the Project.

NSW Roads and Maritime Services and Transport for NSW

The RMS and Transport for NSW comments and specific input to the Project DGRs were documented in a letter dated 14 December 2011, and an email dated 23 November 2011 respectively. A copy of the letter and the email are attached to the DGRs (Attachment 1).

The issues raised by the RMS and Transport for NSW in their correspondence have been considered during the preparation of this EIS and are addressed in Section 4.11 and Appendix F.

Whitehaven met with the RMS in September 2012 to discuss the Project, and in particular, the conceptual design of the Kamilaroi Highway overpass.

Key issues raised by the RMS included:

- the requirements for the formation of a works authorisation deed and a construction traffic management plan prior to construction of the Kamilaroi Highway overpass;
- the long-term management of the infrastructure, including the fate of the highway overpass post-mining; and
- requirement to consult further during the detailed design of the highway overpass.

The RMS were generally supportive of the development of the private haul road and Kamilaroi Highway overpass, acknowledging the potential for increased safety to other road users and decreased maintenance requirements for the Kamilaroi Highway.

Namoi Catchment Management Authority

The Namoi CMA's comments and specific input to the Project DGRs were documented in a letter dated 9 December 2011. A copy of the letter is attached to the DGRs (Attachment 1).

In summary, the key environmental issues raised by the Namoi CMA included:

- potential impacts on flora and fauna from clearing, specifically impacts resulting from fragmentation of vegetation, destruction of habitat, corridor loss, edge effects, increased predation and weed introduction (Sections 4.9 and 4.10, and Appendix E);
- cumulative effects of clearing and proposed biodiversity offset strategy (Sections 4.9 and 4.10 and Appendix E);
- potential impacts on groundwater, especially with regard to likely quantities and qualities of groundwater intercepted (Section 4.4 and Appendix A);
- potential impacts on surface water, including predicted changes to hydrology, water quality and vegetation communities (Sections 4.5 and 4.9, and Appendices B and E);
- potential impacts on Aboriginal archaeology and cultural heritage (Section 4.13 and Appendix I);

- impacts on surrounding agricultural lands, including soils and land capability (Section 4.3 and Appendix G); and
- rehabilitation of the mine site (Section 5) including assessment of soil types, soil stripping, land capability, land use and final landforms (Appendix G).

The Namoi CMA also requested the following documents be considered in this EIS:

- *Extractive Industries Policy* (Namoi CMA, 2009);
- *Namoi CMA Biodiversity Offsets Policy* (Namoi CMA, 2011a); and
- *Namoi Catchment Action Plan 2010-2020* (Namoi CAP) (Namoi CMA, 2011b).

A meeting was held with representatives of the Namoi CMA and the NOW on 15 June 2012 and included presentations by the groundwater and surface water specialist consultants. In particular the meeting was used to discuss:

- the groundwater model extent, layers and results of transient calibration;
- Project-only and cumulative groundwater model predictions;
- predicted groundwater licensing requirements;
- Project water demand, water supply and water licensing;
- potential impacts on downstream surface water resources during operations and post-closure, including the final void recovery analysis; and
- mitigation strategies and the proposed Project Water Management System.

The key issues raised by the Namoi CMA at the meeting were generally consistent with the comments and input to the Project DGRs documented in the letter dated 9 December 2011.

In addition to the above, the Namoi CMA was notified as part of the Aboriginal community consultation process (Section 3.1.6).

Where relevant to the Project, the issues raised by Namoi CMA have been considered during the preparation of this EIS.

Forests NSW

Forests NSW manage the Vickery State Forest in the north of the Project area.

Forests NSW were consulted on 29 October 2012 to:

- provide a description of the Project; and
- explain how no clearing would be conducted within the Vickery State Forest as a result of the Project.

No specific Project-related issues or concerns were raised by Forests NSW at the meeting.

3.1.3 Local Government Agencies

Gunnedah Shire Council

A copy of the Preliminary Environmental Assessment was provided to the Gunnedah Shire Council in November 2011, and a representative from the Council attended the PFM on 1 December 2011. The Gunnedah Shire Council Director of Planning and Environmental Services subsequently confirmed to the DP&I that the DGRs satisfactorily addressed the areas of interest to the Council.

The Gunnedah Shire Council is represented on the Community Consultative Committees (CCCs) for Whitehaven's existing mining operations in the Gunnedah Shire, including the Tarrawonga, Rocglen and Sunnyside Coal Mines. In addition, Whitehaven implements contributions plans and road maintenance agreements (e.g. Blue Vale Road) with the Gunnedah Shire Council in accordance with existing arrangements for these mines.

A Project-specific meeting was held with the General Manager, Director of Engineering Services, and the Director of Planning and Environmental Services of the Gunnedah Shire Council on 12 September 2012. At the meeting, Whitehaven provided an update on the refinements to the Project since the Preliminary Environmental Assessment was lodged, and discussed the potential effects of the Project on the environment and local road network (e.g. Project mine-related traffic on Blue Vale Road, and construction of the proposed Kamilaroi Highway overpass).

Narrabri Shire Council

A copy of the Preliminary Environmental Assessment was provided to the Narrabri Shire Council in November 2011.

A Project-specific meeting was held with the General Manager, Manager of Planning and Development, and the Economic Development Manager of the Narrabri Shire Council on 11 September 2012. At the meeting, Whitehaven provided an update on the refinements to the Project since the Preliminary Environmental Assessment was lodged, and discussed the potential effects of the Project on the environment and possibility of the Project supplying gravel to the Narrabri Shire.

3.1.4 Federal Government Agencies

Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities

Whitehaven lodged a Referral under the EPBC Act with the Commonwealth Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (SEWPaC) on 20 January 2012. A Project meeting with SEWPaC was subsequently held on 10 February 2012 to discuss the Project and the Referral under the EPBC Act.

On 17 May 2012 a delegate of the Commonwealth Minister declared the Project was *not a controlled action if undertaken in a particular manner*. The Notification of Referral Decision (EPBC 2012/6263) stated that the measures listed below must be undertaken to avoid significant impacts on listed threatened species and communities.

- 1) Protection of Winged Peppercross (*Lepidium monolpocoides*) plants. This must include:
 - a) Fencing and signposting the patch of Winged Peppercross plants located north-west of the Western Emplacement area, incorporating a 20 m buffer around the patch, prior to the commencement of the action, to avoid accidental damage/disturbance.
 - b) Excluding stock from the fenced patch of Winged Peppercross plants.
- 2) Translocating the population of approximately 46 Winged Peppercross plants from within the Western Emplacement area footprint to the fenced protection area to the north-west of the Western Emplacement area. This must include:
 - a) Collection of seed from Winged Peppercross plants within the Western Emplacement area footprint, and subsequent planting of these seeds within the fenced protection area to the north-west of the Western Emplacement area.

- b) Translocation of individual Winged Peppercross plants by hand from within the Western Emplacement area footprint, to within the fenced protection area to the north-west of the Western Emplacement area. This must be undertaken using appropriate techniques as described in *"Guidelines for the translocation of threatened plants in Australia"* (Vallee *et al.*, 2004).
- 3) Undertaking a monitoring and maintenance program over the life of the action. This must include:
 - a) Annual monitoring of the protected area.
 - b) Undertaking weed and pest control within the protected area, should monitoring suggest that these are required.
 - c) Repair of the fence if inadequacies are identified.

In accordance with the above requirements Whitehaven has fenced the identified Winged Peppercross plants. Further discussion of their proposed management is provided in Section 4.9.3 and Appendix E.

3.1.5 Infrastructure Owners/Service Providers

Essential Energy (formerly Country Energy)

Essential Energy owns and maintains a 66 kV ETL near the south-western extent of the Project (Figure 2-3a). This line services the existing infrastructure at the Vickery Coal Mine (Section 2.1) and would need to be relocated around the southern margin of the Project area in order to service the MIA (Section 2.4.5).

Whitehaven consulted with Essential Energy in October 2012 to provide background information regarding the Project, confirm the capacity and location of existing ETL, and to discuss the requirement to re-align sections of the line during the Project life.

Essential Energy indicated that the approval process and requirements for realignment of the 11 kV ETL would be as described in Chapter 5 of the *National Electricity Rules* (Australian Energy Market Commission, 2012) and *Operational Procedure – General Terms and Conditions for the Supply of Electricity to New Subdivisions and Site Developments* (Essential Energy, 2011).

3.1.6 Public Consultation

Local Community and Affected Landowners

During the preparation of this EIS, Project-specific newsletters were produced by Whitehaven in January 2012, May 2012 and September 2012 and distributed to inform the local community of the Project Application and to provide updates on progress of the EIS and specialist studies. Copies of the Project newsletters are provided in Attachment 6.

A Project community information day was also held at Boggabri Bowling Club on 13 September 2012, to provide an opportunity for the local community to ask Whitehaven, and the specialists preparing the EIS studies, any specific queries or issues of concern relating to the Project. The Project community information day was attended by representatives of:

- Whitehaven;
- Heritage Computing;
- Evans & Peck;
- McKenzie Soil Management;
- Niche Environmental and Heritage; and
- Resource Strategies.

Issues raised by members of the local community during the Project community information day included:

- cumulative impacts of the Project plus the other nearby mines on the acoustic, air quality and visual amenity of nearby privately owned properties (Sections 4.6, 4.7 and 4.12 and Appendices C, D and H, respectively);
- potential impacts of the Project on local groundwater and surface water use, and potential impacts on downstream landholders through flooding and/or reduction in flows (Sections 4.4 and 4.5 and Appendices A and B);
- the proposed Project noise and air monitoring program (Sections 4.6 and 4.7, respectively);
- final void depth, location, rehabilitation strategy and potential long-term impacts on local surface and groundwater resources (Sections 4.4 and 4.5 and Appendices A and B); and
- agricultural capability of the land within the Project area and the proposed biodiversity offset area (Section 4.3 and Appendix G).

In addition, a number of local landholders participated in the bore census undertaken in March 2012 as part of the Groundwater Assessment (Appendix A), and several landholders provided agricultural land use information in September and October 2012 as part of the Agricultural Assessment (Appendix G).

Whitehaven has consulted with landholders in the immediate vicinity of the Project with regard to property acquisition where the environmental studies indicate that the predicted air quality and noise impacts may exceed key criteria.

Aboriginal Community

Aboriginal community consultation was undertaken in accordance with OEH's *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Consultation Requirements for Proponents 2010* (NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water [DECCW], 2010a) and the *Draft Guidelines for Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment and Community Consultation* (DEC, 2005a). In accordance with these guidelines, Whitehaven notified the following parties regarding the Project:

- OEH Dubbo Environmental Protection and Regulation Group (EPRG);
- Red Chief Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC);
- The Registrar, NSW *Aboriginal Land Rights Act, 1983*;
- Native Title Services Corporation Limited (NTSCORP);
- The National Native Title Tribunal;
- Namoi CMA;
- Gunnedah Shire Council; and
- Narrabri Shire Council.

The above listed parties were requested to advise Whitehaven of the names of any Aboriginal person or group who could hold cultural knowledge of, or have a right or interest in Aboriginal objects, places and/or Aboriginal cultural heritage values in the Project area or surrounds.

In addition to the above notifications, Whitehaven also identified Aboriginal stakeholders with which it had previously consulted in regard to nearby Whitehaven operations. These stakeholders were notified and invited to participate in the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment.

In addition to the written notifications, a notice was placed in the Namoi Valley Independent (29 September 2011) seeking registrations from interested Aboriginal parties. The notice invited Aboriginal persons or groups who wished to be consulted in relation to the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment process for the Project to contact Whitehaven.

Registrations of interest to the notifications and Public Notice were received from the following Aboriginal stakeholders:

- Aboriginal Native Title Consultants;
- Bigundi Biame Traditional People;
- Bill Mitchell;
- Brian Draper;
- Bullen Bullen Consultants;
- Bullwarra Consultants;
- Cacatua Culture Consultants;
- Cindy Foley;
- Deslee Talbott Consultants;
- Dulcie Robinson;
- Giwiir Consultants;
- Gomeroi Namoi Traditional Group;
- Gomery Cultural Consultants
- Gomilaroi Cultural Consultancy;
- Gunida Gunyah Aboriginal Corporation;
- Gunjeewong Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation;
- Gunnedah Elders Justice Committee;
- Henry Roser-Talbott;
- Hunter Valley Cultural Consultants;
- James Foley;
- Joan Suey;
- Joyce Dorrington;
- Judith Walters;
- Linda Roser;
- Lorraine Robinson;
- Michael Long;
- Min-Min Aboriginal Corporation;
- Minnga Consultants;
- Muswellbrook Cultural Consultants;
- Ngurrimbaa-Gunidjaa Traditional Owners;
- Patricia Gail Reynolds;
- Red Chief LALC;

- Reg Talbott;
- Roger Matthews;
- Ronald Long;
- Sonny Fitzroy;
- T & G Culture Consultants;
- T’N’L Site Trackers;
- Traditional Owner of Gomeroi Country;
- Upper Hunter Heritage Consultants;
- Yinarr Cultural Services; and
- Yvonne Rodgers.

All stakeholders who registered were invited to participate in the assessment.

A detailed description of the consultation undertaken with the registered Aboriginal parties/groups during the preparation of this EIS is provided in the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment (Appendix I) and Section 4.13.

Namoi Catchment Water Study

The Namoi Catchment Water Study was steered by a Ministerial Oversight Committee (MOC) appointed by the (then) NSW Minister for Mineral Resources. In accordance with the Terms of Reference, the MOC appointed an independent expert (Schlumberger Water Services) to carry out the study, which released the Final Study Report in July 2012. The MOC also appointed a Technical Advisor and liaised with a Stakeholder Advisory Group.

Whitehaven provided a briefing to the MOC during the study establishment phase and has provided several briefings to the independent expert for development of the numerical model for the study. A representative of Whitehaven was nominated as an alternative member representing coal companies on the Namoi Catchment Water Study Stakeholder Advisory Group.

3.2 COMMUNITY INITIATIVES AND INVOLVEMENT

3.2.1 Community Consultative Committees

The Tarrawonga and Rocglen CCCs have been established and operate in accordance with their respective Project Approvals. Both CCCs meet on a quarterly basis and along with Whitehaven representatives consist of community representatives including local landholders, affected landowners and Narrabri Shire Council and Gunnedah Shire Council representatives.

3.2.2 Website and Complaints Hotline

Whitehaven maintains a website within the Whitehaven web domain (www.whitehavencoal.com.au) for the general public to keep up to date with the operations at its mines as well as new developments including the Project.

The web domain is a significant source of information including:

- mine operations and asset details;
- environmental management, monitoring and reporting information;
- CCC records;
- investor details;
- career opportunities; and
- contact details.

The web address is provided below:

<http://www.whitehavencoal.com.au>

The Whitehaven web address also hosts Project-related information, including:

- the Preliminary Environmental Assessment for the Project; and
- Project newsletters.

3.2.3 Community Programs and Sponsorships/Scholarships

Whitehaven plays an active role in local communities through financial contributions to regional events and facilities, including:

- contributions to the Westpac Rescue Helicopter service;
- contribution to the upgrade of the Taylor Oval and its associated facilities in Boggabri;
- various donations and contributions to the Boggabri Hospital, Boggabri pre-school, Boggabri Pool, Gunnedah South School, Gunnedah Urban Landcare, Gunnedah Show Society, Wean Race Club; and
- contributions to the Country Education Foundation of Australia, Dorothea Mackellar Memorial Society (National Poetry Competition), and the Gunnedah Shire Council Community Scholarship Fund.

Whitehaven would continue to provide funding contributions to community programs and groups during the life of the Project.

3.2.4 Media

Advertisements regarding the Aboriginal heritage consultation and the Project Community information day appeared in the local newspaper (i.e. *The Courier* and/or *Namoi Valley Independent*).

3.2.5 Public Reporting

In accordance with the Project Approvals and relevant mining tenement conditions for the Tarawonga, Rocglen, Canyon and Sunnyside Coal Mines, Whitehaven produces an Annual Review (previously referred as Annual Environmental Management Reports [AEMRs]) to review the environmental performance of the mining operations (and rehabilitation activities in the case of the Canyon Coal Mine). Copies of the previous AEMRs are available on the Whitehaven website (Section 3.2.2).

Whitehaven also publishes Annual and Quarterly Reports for investors which are made available within the Whitehaven web domain (Section 3.2.2).

3.2.6 Suppliers

Whitehaven's existing mines support a number of local and National suppliers, including:

- P.E Harris Earthmoving Pty Limited (scraper fleet);
- Jackson Earthmoving Pty Ltd (dozers);
- Brown's Tyre Service Pty Ltd;
- G & B Ward Earthmoving Pty Ltd (rehabilitation activities);
- Orica Limited (explosives); and
- Toll Transport Pty Ltd (sized ROM coal transport).

Approval of the Project would allow Whitehaven to continue to support local and National suppliers of the mining operations.