



Presentation by Brian Nicholls, Mine Manager, Springvale Mine

Planning Assessment Commission Meeting
Springvale Mine Extension MOD 1
Friday 7th April 2017
Lithgow & District Workman's Club

I would like to thank the Commission for providing me the opportunity to speak at today's Public Meeting.

My name is Brian Nicholls. I am the Mine Manager at Springvale Mine.

Springvale Mine is an established underground coal mine. It has a long history in the area with well established community relationships.

The mine has provided employment and support to the local community as well as supplying coal to the local power stations for more than 20 years.

Springvale currently operates under State Significant Development Consent SSD 5594. The consent allows Springvale to carry out mining operations until 31st December 2028.

Springvale Mine is proposing to modify this consent with a view:

- To secure and create more employment opportunities at the mine,
- To increase annual production to provide future marketing and operational flexibility, and
- To increase the capacity of an already existing stockpile area.

There is no proposal to change the approved longwall mining technique or the approved mine plan to achieve the proposed increase in production.

The proposed modification does not include any physical works or significant changes to the existing underground mining operations.

Minimal changes to the surface infrastructure will be required to extend the stockpile area within the existing footprint.

There is no proposal to change the life of the consent or the hours of operation.

The proposed increase in production will be achieved through:

- An increase in workforce,
- The installation and operation of additional underground mining equipment, and
- Improved equipment utilisation and availability.

The increase in production will ensure the economic viability of the mine. It will also improve the operational flexibility of Springvale to be able to respond to market opportunities. This flexibility has potentially positive implications for the State, as the ability to increase production in favourable markets which would result in an increase in royalty returns for the State of NSW.

Furthermore, the proposed modification will result in positive impact from the direct and indirect employment as well as providing certainty of employment for the existing employees.

The effects of the direct and indirect wages will further benefit the local community with the majority of Springvale's workforce living in the Lithgow and the surrounding areas.

The recent media reports of a major energy crisis looming in Australia illustrates the criticality of a secure and sustainable supply of energy.

Mount Piper Power Station is reliant on Springvale as its sole supplier of fuel. Mount Piper supplies approximately 15% of New South Wales electricity.

To summarise, the modification is a minor alteration of the approved Springvale Mine Extension Project and hence can be considered to be substantially the same development.

The adverse environmental impacts of the proposed modification elements are predicted not to be significant.

Any potential impact can be managed appropriately to minimise harm to the environment.

The benefits of the modification can be therefore achieved with little or no risk of adverse impacts on the environment.

In 2015 the mine had a 'stand down' as a consequence of a delay in the approval process.

Late last year a survey of our employees was conducted so as to gain a better understanding of the impact this 'stand down' had on our workforce, their families and our local community.

Whilst we are currently finalising this report of the survey results, the initial indications are reinforcing to us how important Springvale Mine is to the Lithgow community.

Our people live locally and are actively engaged in the local community and when Springvale is impacted and jobs are threatened, this impact flows through to the local economy and the broader community.

It is only to be expected for people to seek stability and security of long term employment. When there are uncertainties and doubts to the continuance of employment, people start to look to relocate from the area to secure work.

Through my own experiences I can relate to and understand their concerns.

Prior to concluding my presentation this morning I would like to offer a personal insight and draw upon some potential similarities.

My family and I emigrated to Australia in 2006 because of the uncertainty that existed in the British coal industry. With my personal values and morals I felt that I had no other option but to relocate my family overseas so I could continue to provide a future for them.

Sadly my fears for the future of the British mining industry have been realised with the closure of Kellingley Colliery in December 2015, effectively marking the end of deep mining in the United Kingdom.

I can assure you that emigrating is no small undertaking and is not a decision that one takes lightly. The upheaval of moving your family away from loved ones, friends and all they know is traumatic and very emotional. Needless to say it takes a long time to come to terms with a decision of such magnitude. If my wife was stood here today I would suggest that she would tell you that she still struggles with the notion that her parents who are both in their seventies are so far away, in particular when there are health issues and illness. No matter how much you try to compensate, special occasions such as birthdays, anniversaries and Christmas are just not the same.

I grew up in Castleford, a thriving, busy and bustling industrial town in the heart of the West Yorkshire Coalfield. There were several mines surrounding the township which offered employment to a significant percentage of the local population either directly in the mines or in the supply of manufacturing, engineering and in other community services. I began my working life in these mines.

On a recent trip back home to visit family and friends I saw first hand the results and the devastating impact on a community following the mine closure program.

We visited Castleford on a Saturday afternoon and were dismayed to see the effects of what happens when the wrong policies are adopted.

The town was deserted. Many of the shops had very few customers. There were several premises that were vacant and unoccupied. It was very different to how I remembered Castleford.

Quite frankly I was shocked and disappointed. There was nothing left in the town.

Many of the businesses had either closed their operations or relocated.

It was a ghost town.

My message to you today is to urge you not to make the same mistakes that others have made.

Centennial Coal are vital to the Lithgow community.

We are proud to be a member of this community.

We are a large employer that makes a significant contribution toward the local economy.

We do not take for granted the huge level of support this community gives us.

Lithgow is unique.

Where else would mining enjoy such huge support?

Springvale enjoys huge support from this community and we know that it will continue to underpin the areas local economy whilst also contributing to keeping the lights on in NSW.

Thank you once again for allowing me to speak at the meeting today.



Brian Nicholls
Mine Manager
Springvale Mine