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6 December, 2012

WHC APPLIES FOR TEMPORARY APPROVAL TO TRUCK COAL FROM NARRABRI MINE

Whitehaven Coal Limited (ASX:WHC) today announced it has lodged an application for NSW State Government approval to truck a limited amount of coal from its Narrabri underground mine to its Gunnedah Coal Handling and Preparation Plant.

The application has been made under Section 75W of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act) which relates to modifications to existing approvals. The application specifically relates to the emergency transport of coal by road until such time as the damaged railway has been repaired and rail transport of coal can recommence.

Yesterday evening, Whitehaven also received updated advice from the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) advising it expects the track to return to operation by 25 December, 2012.

As part of the approval process Whitehaven has provided a traffic assessment and a road noise impact assessment. Copies of the application and the relevant assessments will be on exhibition on the Department of Planning and Infrastructure's website. The website also publicises the appropriate details for members of the community wanting to lodge a submission in relation to the application.

The scope of the application has been based on the amount of additional coal that can be handled by Whitehaven's Gunnedah CHPP, which is significantly lower than the current coal production levels at the Narrabri mine.

"We welcome the ARTC's advice of yesterday evening that the track may reopen by Christmas. However, we need to proceed with contingency planning including seeking this approval to truck limited amounts of coal," Whitehaven Coal Managing Director Mr Tony Haggarty said.

"As announced previously, these are exceptional circumstances and we have been consulting extensively with local and State Government in relation to developing a short term solution," Whitehaven Managing Director Mr Tony Haggarty said.

"It is important to note that should the approval be granted, it would take some time to build up to the maximum permitted trucking level. This is due to both the difficulty in sourcing large numbers of trucks at short notice, and the need to manage the process safely through a staged ramp-up."

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Whitehaven anticipates that without the ability to transport coal from site, coal stockpile capacity at Narrabri will be reached during December 2012 and operations at the mine would need to cease. This would result in lost production and financial impacts as well as the potential need to dislocate employees to other operations.

“Numerous other measures are being taken to avoid any shut down of production. However these measures can only assist to a certain extent,” Mr Haggarty said.

Summary of Proposed Modification

Method of coal transport	Fleet of 59 on-highway coal haulage trucks (contractor operated).
Hours of coal transport	6.00 am ¹ to 10.00 pm Monday to Saturday. No coal transport Sundays or Public Holidays.
Volume of coal transported	Up to 80,000 tonnes per week.
Duration of road transport campaign	Up to 2 – 3 months.
Transport route	Narrabri Mine Access Road. Kamilaroi Highway. CHPP Access Road.
Key management measures	Development of a Temporary Transport Management Plan. Dedicated campaign Project Manager (assisted by trucking contractor Project Managers). Driver training and compliance with Whitehaven’s existing contractor driver trucking policy. Regular reporting of campaign updates, incidents, complaints and management. Community notification through newspaper advertisements, Whitehaven website, letterbox drop and hotline.

¹ 6.00 am departure from Narrabri Coal Mine arriving at the Whitehaven CHPP after 7.00 am.

Under this maximum level of haulage there would be approximately 420 return truck movements each day between the Narrabri mine and the Gunnedah CHPP.

Should the approval be granted, Whitehaven will provide notice of the trucking campaign and regular updates to the community through weekly advertisements and or/public notice in local newspapers, as well as on the Whitehaven website. Landholders immediately adjacent to the proposed haul route will receive individual notification.

A hotline will be established to allow community to access information during the trucking campaign, and to lodge any complaints or concerns.

For further information please contact:

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