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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Key points

- The proponent for the Ashton Coal Project is White Mining Limited;
- White Mining Limited is a privately owned Australian company; and
- The Ashton Coal Project is situated 14km north west of Singleton in the Hunter Valley of New South Wales.

1.1 The Proponent

The proponent of this project is White Mining Limited (WML) (ACN 009 713 893), a privately owned Australian incorporated company.

WML has been established in the coal mining industry since 1975. Over the last 25 years WML has been involved in both coal mine development and mine operation. In 1975 WML commenced (under contract) the Ashford Open Cut Mine for the North West County Council in northern NSW. Operations finished in 1990 followed by complete site rehabilitation and revegetation. The area was then handed back to the state government. The next venture was the development of the Ulan coal mine, near Mudgee, New South Wales (NSW). The open cut mine included the first mobile in-pit crushing and conveying system introduced to the Australian coal mining industry. In 1986, the underground mine was fully developed and included the first of the new generation superwalls (longwall) to be operated in Australia. It is noteworthy that after some 15 years, this system is still considered one of the most efficient coal operations in the country. As part of the initial development WML undertook the construction of some 150 kilometres (kms) of rail line from Ulan to Sandy Hollow, thus enabling export coals to be transported by rail to the Port of Newcastle.

In 1993, WML commissioned the North Goonyella Mine in the Bowen Basin area of central Queensland, approximately 165kms west of Mackay. This development saw one of the largest longwall mining systems installed, capable of extracting coal up to 5.5metre (m) seam thickness. Ultimately two longwall systems were installed ensuring optimum operation and resource recovery. As part of the overall project development WML undertook the expansion of the Dalrymple Bay Coal Terminal at Hay Point, 30kms south of Mackay. The expansion works included the duplication of the rail unloading facility and associated conveyors, additional stockpile pad space and a high capacity mobile stacker reclaimer.

In 1997, as shareholder and manager of the United Colliery Joint Venture in the Hunter Valley, WML contracted for the supply and installation of the first underground chain haulage system in Australia. These systems comprise articulated chain haulage sections with an overall length of some

150m, linking the continuous miner to the fixed belt conveyors. These systems are used extensively in the USA in non-longwall mining applications.

Commencing in 1991, WML designed, constructed, commissioned operated then handed over to the client, Coal India Limited, the Piparwar open cut mine and coal preparation plant located in Bihas in India. Output of the mine is currently 8.0 Million tonnes per annum (Mtpa) with capacity to expand to 10.0Mtpa. This state of the art coal mine was developed on a turnkey basis. An independent report, commissioned by the Australian Government prior to handover, confirmed the mine was built to world standards. It also reported that the approach to local environmental issues was world's best practice. It is noteworthy that at the time, the contract for this project constituted the largest single business transaction ever undertaken between India and Australia.

WML is also developing Ultra Clean Coal (UCC) technology through its wholly owned subsidiary UCC Energy Pty Ltd. This technology has been developed in conjunction with the CSIRO and uses alkali/acid digestion to dissolve minerals out of the coal under moderate temperature and pressure conditions, without the loss of coal properties.

The final product is a new clean solid fuel that has ash levels between 0.1% and 0.2% and can be directly fired into a gas turbine. Thermal efficiency is increased from around 38% for a conventional coal fired power station to approximately 53% with direct injection of UCC into a gas turbine, whilst simultaneously reducing greenhouse gas emissions by up to 24%.

The project is supported by both the Federal and State Governments and the Japanese Government has committed to a pilot project involving the modification of an existing gas turbine to accept the UCC fuel.

In conclusion, WML is a highly experienced and innovative coal company who will apply their knowledge from previously successful operations to the Ashton Coal Project.

1.2 Location

The Ashton Coal Project is situated 14km north west of Singleton in the Hunter Valley of NSW as indicated in **Figure 1.1**. The village of Camberwell is located approximately 600m to the south east of the proposed open cut and 1,500m east of the mine surface facilities.

The Main Northern Railway forms the northern boundary of the site. The New England Highway is located to the south of the proposed open cut and mine surface facilities. Glennies Creek Road is located along the south eastern boundary of the proposed open cut operation.

The Liddell and Bayswater Power Stations are located north west of the site. Neighbouring open cut mines include Glendell (north), Camberwell (east) Ravensworth South/Narama (west) and Lemington (south). Underground mines close to the Ashton Coal Project include Glennies Creek (north east), Nardell (north west) and Cumnock (north west).

1.3 Land Description

The land to which the Development Application applies is shown in **Figure 1.2**. The Ashton Coal Project lies wholly within the Shire of Singleton. The lands are described in **Table 1.1**.

Owner	Description	Parish	Country
Pacific Power	Part Lot 1243 DP 1007536	Vane/Ravensworth	Durham
Raynest Pty Ltd (Coal & Allied)	Part Lot 701 DP 828294	Vane	Durham
A S Bowman	Part Lot 70 DP 752499	Vane	Durham
Glendell Tenements	Part Lot 11 DP 261916	Vane	Durham
Glendell Tenements	Lot 1 DP 745486	Vane	Durham
Glendell Tenements	Lot 59 DP 752499	Vane	Durham
Glendell Tenements	Lot 1 DP 195598	Vane	Durham
Glendell Tenements	Lot 3 DP 195598	Vane	Durham
White Mining Limited	Lot 101 DP 635131	Vane	Durham
Crown	Crown Land incl Crown Roads Adjoining Lot 1 DP 745486	Vane	Durham
Crown	Lot 128 DP 752499, Reserve No. 89555 (Rubbish Tip)	Vane	Durham
Crown	Travelling Stock Reserve No 66768	Vane	Durham
Crown	Camberwell Temporary Common (Part)	Vane	Durham
Rail Infrastructure Corporation	Main Northern Railway	Vane	Durham
Roads and Traffic Authority	New England Highway	Vane	Durham
Singleton Shire Council	Glennies Creek Road	Vane	Durham
White Mining Limited	Exploration Licence EL4918 Exploration Licence EL5860 Mine Extension Area – Surface to depth 20 metres		

1.4 Project Review

The development is to be known as the Ashton Coal Project. It will comprise three integrated components which are depicted in **Figure 1.3** and described below:

- A small open cut mine, called the Ashton Open Cut, located in the north eastern corner of the development area, which will mine coal down to the Lower Barrett seam. Out of pit emplacements will be established to the east and south west of the open cut;

- Surface facilities will be situated north of the New England Highway and will include offices, coal preparation, stockpiling and train loading facilities; and
- An underground mine located to the south of the New England Highway. Access will be gained from the highwall of the Arites Pit which is immediately adjacent to the surface facilities. Bowmans Creek will be diverted around the area subsided by the underground mine and along the western boundary of the project area.

WML has submitted a Mine Lease Application to the Minister for Mineral Resources seeking a consent to undertake a coal mining operation in the area.

1.5 Structure of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

This EIS has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the:-

- Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979;
- Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000;
- Requirements issued by the Director General, Department of Urban Affairs and Planning (DUAP), dated 4 October 2001, refer to **Appendix A of Volume 2**.

The contents of the EIS are as follows:

VOLUME 1

Abbreviations and Glossary of Terms

Executive Summary

Section 1.0 : Introduction

Provides a background to the proponent and proposed development.

Section 2.0 : Planning Context, Approvals and Consultation

Explains the statutory process and approvals sought, as well as providing details of consultation undertaken.

Section 3.0 : Analysis of Existing Environment

Documents the existing environment of the site and its surrounds including water resources, soil, land capability, flora and fauna, noise, air quality and archaeological aspects plus infrastructure and socio-economic characteristics.

Section 4.0 : The Development Proposal

Provides a full description of all aspects of the proposed Ashton Coal Project. This section describes the proposal to operate an open cut coal mine to the north of the New England Highway and the operation of an underground longwall mine. The proposal also includes the construction and operation of a coal preparation plant and a railway siding for loading of product coals.

Section 5.0 : The Likely Impact on the Environment

Provides an assessment of the likely impact of the Ashton Coal Project proposal on the natural, cultural and economic environment. This section draws upon specialist studies in areas of potential or actual impact.

Section 6.0 : Measures Proposed to Mitigate Adverse Impacts on the Environment

Provides a description and assessment of measures proposed to eliminate or reduce identified or potential impacts arising from the proposal proceeding.

Section 7.0: Alternatives

Examines alternatives to the proposal and the consequences of not proceeding.

Section 8.0 : Project Justification

Provides a justification for the proposal in terms of social, environmental and economic factors.

Section 9.0 : References

VOLUME 2

Appendices are contained in Volume 2 of the EIS.

VOLUME 3

Figures, plans and drawings are contained in Volume 3 of the EIS.

1.6 How to Read this EIS

The content of this EIS is largely determined by the requirements of the Environmental Planning & Assessment Regulation 2000, Schedule 2 and specific requirements for this proposal provided by the Director-General, DUAP. In the formulation of the Director-General's Requirements regulatory bodies that have, or are likely to have, an involvement in the Ashton Coal Project proposal have been consulted.

To meet the Director-General's Requirements specialist practitioners have investigated environmental and technical issues. The assessments, conclusions and recommendations of these specialist studies are incorporated within the main body of the EIS. These reports are, at times and of necessity, somewhat complex to persons unfamiliar with the field of the specialist study. The specialist reports have been included in the EIS as Appendices, so that the conclusions drawn by the reports are transparent and open to scrutiny by regulatory agencies, other specialists in the respective field and by other interested parties.

The report is layered, with a summary, main text and specialist studies. This enables the reader to choose the "layer" relevant to his or her depth or interest or requirements. A comprehensive Table of Contents enables the reader to locate relevant sections. Tables are incorporated within the text of the EIS whilst specialist studies are to be found in Volume 2 and Figures in Volume 3.

1.7 Study Team

This EIS has been prepared by HLA-Envirosciences in conjunction with WML. Various specialist consultants, who were coordinated by the principal parties, undertook the specialist studies. The personnel involved and their role are as follows:

White Mining Limited

Ian Callow	Project Manager
Peter Barton	Technical Manager
Belinda Burgess	Project Secretary

HLA-Envirosciences

Alan Wells	Project Director
Renae Gifford	Project Manager
Neil Pennington, Ross Hodge	Noise and Vibration
Gary Freeland	Planning Issues and Visuals
Vanessa Hardy	Archaeology
Chris Kidd, Paul Tammetta	Water Studies
Neil McElhinney	Flora and Fauna
Steve Sylvester	Preliminary Hazard Analysis
Dee Murdoch	Soils and Land Capability
Colin Davies	Background Environmental Monitoring
Sandy Miles	Research

Specialist Consultants

N. Holmes - Holmes Air Sciences

G. Holt - Graham Holt and Associates

P. Anink - Marine Pollution Research

Chris Thomas – Patterson Britton

Russell Humble

Mine Planning Scheduling

Co Resources Pty Ltd

John Furner

Mark Dunnell

Gary Walker

Air Quality

Subsidence

Fish Habitat

Surface Hydrology and Creek Diversion

Roads and Traffic

Open Cut Mine Planning

Open Cut Mine Planning

Technical Officer