
Olympic Dam statement on environmental impact

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BHP Billiton released a Draft Environmental Impact Statement to seek government approvals for a further expansion of its operation at Olympic Dam in northern South Australia.

The Draft EIS will be on public exhibition for 14 weeks during which submissions can be made to government about the proposed expansion.

At the end of this public exhibition period, BHP Billiton will prepare a Supplementary EIS to respond to all of the issues raised by the public submissions.

The Federal, South Australian and Northern Territory governments will then consider the Draft EIS, the public submissions and the Supplementary EIS in making their decisions about the project.

The Draft EIS has been almost five years in preparation and follows the publication of previous environmental assessments in 1982 and 1997 to permit Olympic Dam's development to its current status as Australia's largest underground mine.

The expansion described in this latest EIS would be a progressive development requiring construction activity over a period of 11 years.

It would be centred on the creation of a new open pit mine that would lift ore production six fold and require expanded minerals processing facilities. Major support infrastructure also would be built including a coastal desalination plant, a new power line and possibly a gas fired power station, a rail line, an airport, port facilities, a village to accommodate workers and more housing, retail, commercial and community facilities in Roxby Downs.

Consistent with our disciplined approach to project approval, each project remains under review until it is approved by the BHP Billiton Board for execution.

BHP Billiton will provide estimated costs if the project is approved for execution by the Board. As the company has previously advised, after government decisions about the project have been made, BHP Billiton will be in a position to consider the next steps for the project taking into account the economic climate at the time.

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