

23 August 2019

Narrabri Coal exploration licence suspended

The NSW Resources Regulator has suspended exploration licence EL6243 held by Narrabri Coal Pty Ltd and five other joint venture partners due to alleged breaches of conditions of the licence.

The exploration licence forms part of Whitehaven Coal's Narrabri operations located 24 km north-west of Boggabri.

The suspension follows the Resources Regulator's state-wide compliance blitz in June, which identified that three access tracks had been cleared at the site, contrary to conditions of approval.

Resources Regulator Executive Director Anthony Keon said the actions breached the licence holder's activity approval and contravened the Mining Act.

"The construction of the unauthorised tracks resulted in significant environmental harm and demonstrates a comprehensive failure to observe fundamental regulatory obligations in relation to the exploration activity approvals.

"Exploration activities are subject to strict conditions in order to ensure appropriate environmental protections. This includes avoiding environmentally sensitive areas and diverting around, or relocating, hollow-bearing trees to protect wildlife habitat.

"The actions by the licence holders warrant strong regulatory action and the Resources Regulator won't hesitate to use all the enforcement tools at its disposal to ensure that mining operators work strictly within their legislative obligations."

The licence holders have acknowledged the offending behaviour and offered to voluntarily suspend all drilling and clearing activities, as well as committing to completing a number of actions before recommencing exploration activities.

However, the Resources Regulator has determined that the nature of the breaches make it more appropriate to suspend their exploration licence, with the only activities permitted being those required to maintain a safe workplace or undertake environmental rehabilitation.

The suspension will remain in place until the licence holders conduct a full review of their management and compliance systems and can satisfy the Regulator that appropriate controls have been put in place to ensure future compliance.

A copy of the suspension notice can be found [here](#).