

Media Release

Tuesday 18 December 2007

Industry Sheds Light on Environmental Innovation

A world-first project to capture greenhouse gas emissions and groundbreaking water conservation technology are amongst a startling list of initiatives that are progressively “greening” the State’s mining industry.

The initiatives, contained in *The State of the Industry Report 2007* released this week, show that local mining companies are re-investing substantial funds reaped from the current mining boom to extend their environmental performance and social contribution within regional communities across NSW.

NSW Minerals Council Chief Executive, Dr Nikki Williams, said the industry’s investment in environmentally sustainable practices and cutting edge new technology had grown rapidly in recent years and won international recognition but remained largely unrecognised at home.

Dr Williams said the Report explodes some common urban myths about the mining industry, which is contributing to the expansion of essential community services through increased taxes and royalties from its record \$12.3 billion in production last year.

“Mining and minerals processing provides more than 47,000 jobs in NSW, with a further 200,000 indirect jobs supported throughout the State.”

The industry supports many robust regional economies but also contributes to every facet of our prosperous economy, from cost effective fuel for electricity, to cars, construction materials and medical equipment.”

“At the same time, we are focussed on delivering solutions to major concerns such as climate change and water management, as well as working with governments and communities to minimise the impacts of mining activities,” said Dr Williams.

NSW coal producers are large contributors to the \$1 billion national COAL21 Fund, a world first voluntary industry initiative to fast track low emission coal technologies to help the global fight against climate change.

Case studies featured in the report include the BHP Billiton’s WestVAMP initiative, which will utilise 20 per cent of West Cliff mine’s ventilation air to achieve a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of 200,000 tonnes of CO2 per year. This is equivalent to producing enough electricity for 20,000 homes, or removing emissions from 45,000 cars from the environment each year.

Rio Tinto Northparkes Mines’ Floating Module is another world first initiative to improve water efficiency by reducing evaporation losses through innovative technology. The module acts as a floating cover on the surface of water storage facilities. Trial work to date has shown that evaporation during summer can be reduced by up to 90 per cent and could be adapted by other industries.

Dr Williams said the NSW Mining industry had an important contribution to make to the State’s economic, environmental and social future.

“At a time when NSW is preparing for major investment to upgrade its critical infrastructure, the strength of the mining industry is underpinning the State’s growth plans,” she said.

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