

## Initial Advice Statement

### Norwich Park (East Pit) Coal Mine Proposal

#### Introduction

*BHP Billiton Mitsubishi Alliance (BMA) proposes to develop East Pit at its existing Norwich Park Coal Mine south of Dysart in central Queensland (“the Proposal”), 256 kilometres (km) south-west of Mackay. East Pit will enable Norwich Park Mine to maintain its existing 5.7 Million tonnes/annum (Mt/a) production and extend the life of the mine. Existing mining activities at Norwich Park Mine are subject to Environmental Authority MIM800126503 and an approved Environmental Management Overview Strategy, and will not be affected by this proposal.*

*All East Pit operations will be staffed by current Norwich Park employees and will utilise existing mining infrastructure.*

*Progressive rehabilitation aims to return a combination of grazing and bushland to all disturbed areas. The pit itself will disturb an area of 263 ha over approximately 16 years, with a total area of approximately 450 hectares (including ex-pit dumps, haul roads, access tracks and a dragline walk road) to be potentially disturbed over the life of the Proposal. East Pit will support mining production in the existing Roper, Leichhardt, Price, Gilbert and Campbell Pits, by producing a high quality coking coal which can be easily blended to extend mine life and meet customer quality specifications. Water management on site aims to protect the downstream water quality in Rolf Creek for existing grazing use.*

*Establishment of East Pit will require the removal of approximately 85 ha of Brigalow (*Acacia harpophylla*) dominant and co-dominant communities (as described under the EPBC Act). As such the Proposal was referred to the Department of Environment and Heritage as a ‘controlled action’ under the EPBC Act, and subsequently received notification that this was the case on 15 April 2004 (referral number 2004/1447). The controlling provisions were considered to be Section 18 and Section 18A – Threatened Species or Ecological Communities.*

*Terms of Reference (ToR) for the EIS for the Project have been prepared. This Initial Advice Statement has been prepared to enable comment on the ToR.*

*The Project requires a Mining Lease over the East Pit area. The EIS for the Project will be prepared in support of the applications for grant of these approvals.*



## The Proponent

The Proponent for the Project is BHP Billiton Mitsubishi Alliance (BMA), GPO Box 1389, Brisbane QLD 4001.

The Norwich Park Coal Project is part of the Central Queensland Coal Associates (CQCA) Project, which incorporates the Norwich Park open-cut mining operations. The CQCA Project is an unincorporated Joint Venture of BHP Coal Pty Ltd, Umal Consolidated Pty Ltd, BHP Queensland Coal Limited, BHP Queensland Coal Investments Pty Ltd, Mitsubishi Developments Pty Ltd, QCT Mining Pty Ltd, , QCT Investments Pty Ltd, QCT Management Limited and BHP Mitsui Coal Pty Ltd and managed by BHP Billiton Mitsubishi Alliance Coal Operations Pty Ltd (BMA).

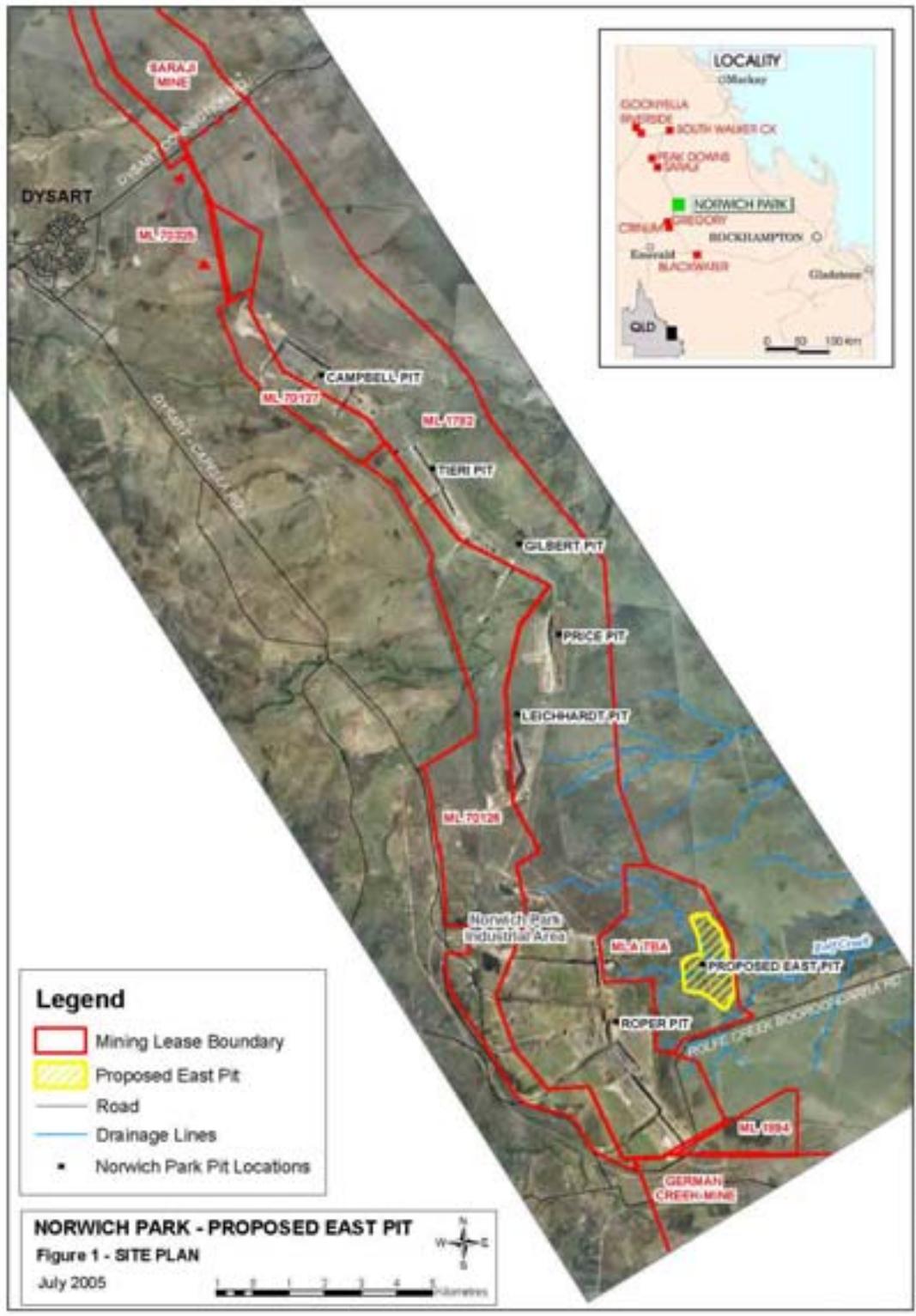
## Mining Operations

BMA commenced mining operations at Norwich Park in 1979, and has produced over 50 Mt of coking coal in this time with a current annual production of about 5.7Mt. **Figure 1** shows the previously approved existing operations at the Roper, Leichhardt, Price, Gilbert and Campbell Pits and the proposed location of the East Pit. Mining is carried out by open cut methods using a combination of dragline, truck and shovel. All Run of Mine coal is transported to the coal preparation plant. Once processed, coal is transported the 256 km from the mine via railway to the Hay Point Port near Mackay for distribution to national and international markets.

The Norwich Park workforce and their families predominantly reside in the purpose built township of Dysart, situated 24km to the north of the mine. Situated within the Shire of Broadsound, the town of Dysart covers an area of 4.61km<sup>2</sup> and has a population of approximately 4000.

All mining operations take place on BMA Coal owned or controlled properties. The mine is set in a sparsely populated area where grazing is the predominant land use.

■ Figure 1 : Norwich Park Mine Locality Map





## **East Pit Proposal**

Economic resources of approximately 8 Mt have been defined in the East Pit area. East Pit is to be mined by conventional open cut methods using dragline in combination with truck and shovel. East Pit production will be on average 0.5 Mt/a, with mining to occur seven days per week to depths from 35 to 80 m below surface level. The life of the operation is expected to be about 16 years, whereby extending the life of the mine. Progressive rehabilitation will occur to return disturbed areas to their existing grazing use.

The development of East Pit will support the production of existing Norwich Park pits, by producing high quality coking coal which can be blended with product from the existing operations to extend mine life and meet customers quality specifications. Although the overall Norwich Park workforce and production rates may vary up and down over time, it is not anticipated that mining within East Pit will significantly impact these operational characteristics, as there will be no requirements to increase the mining fleet or workforce to accommodate East Pit operations.

Open cut mining of the area will be undertaken requiring clearing of vegetation, topsoil removal/replacement, overburden stockpiling, coal extraction and progressive and final rehabilitation of disturbed areas.

Existing mine infrastructure (CPP, rail load out, water dams etc) will accommodate East Pit operations. There will be no coal preparation at East Pit – and no tailings or reject facilities are required. Coal will be hauled 5.3 km along a proposed haul road linking the East Pit to the existing Norwich Park Industrial Area. The haul road will follow existing powerline easements therefore minimising disturbance.

Bingegang water pipeline, which provides raw water to the mine from Bingegang Weir on the Mackenzie River, will be re-aligned to avoid East Pit. It's proposed to move this pipeline, together with a 66kV stub line to the south and west of the pit and then follow an existing easement to minimise the amount of disturbance.

The damming and diversion of the ephemeral Rolf Creek headwaters will be necessary as the creek traverses the East Pit project site from West to East. The impounded waters will be used within the mining operations for dust suppression.

Mining activities are proposed to begin in financial year 2007 dependant on receipt of Commonwealth and State approvals.

## **Background Environment of the East Pit Area**

At present the western portion of the site is owned by BHP Coal & Others (Lot 3 CNS335, SL 12/45187), and covered by a Mining Lease Application (MLA 70315). The eastern portion is currently private freehold land owned by the 'Curran' Family (Lot 4 on CNS 38, GHFL 12/2444) and is covered by an Exploration Permit-Coal (EPC 636). An agreement between BMA and the

Curran Family for land swap of the eastern portion of East Pit has been signed and a land transfer is in progress. Once this occurs a new ML and surface rights approval will be sought for the East Pit area.

Environmental studies have already been completed in the East Pit area. These include studies of waste characterisation, flora & fauna, cultural heritage, Rolf creek diversion, ground and surface waters.

Maps of Norwich Park (1:90 000) were also prepared of Endangered Regional Ecosystem Buffer Zones, Regional Ecosystem Status, Remnant Vegetation Dominant Species, Geological Land Zones and Biodiversity Management Status in June 2004.

A section of the East Pit (approximately 85 ha) contains two endangered regional ecosystems (ERE's) under the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*. These are also listed threatened ecological communities under Part 3 of the EPBC Act. These areas are described in *The Conservation Status of Queensland's Bioregional Ecosystems - Sattler and Williams 1999* as:

- ◆ 11.4.9 - *Acacia harpophylla* shrubby open forest to woodland usually with *Terminalia oblongata* and *Eremophila mitchellii*. Cainozoic clay plains and weathered basalt with cracking clay soils. *Casuarina cristata* sometimes replaces *Acacia harpophylla*; and
- ◆ 11.4.8 - *Eucalyptus cambageana* woodland to open forest with *Acacia harpophylla* or *A. argyrodendron* on Cainozoic clay plains and weathered basalt with cracking clay soils.

Of the endangered or threatened species listed under the EPBC Act, only the Squatter Pigeon (*Geophapa scripta scripta*) was recorded in field investigations conducted by WBM in 2003, and considered likely to occur in the East Pit area. The remaining species identified are not considered likely to occur in the area as it either does not contain suitable habitat for species (eg. wetlands for painted snipe) or the habitats are of insufficient quality in terms of content, structure or value due to habitat degradation or disturbance.

### **Environmental Management of the East Pit Area**

Approximately 85 ha of Brigalow will require removal to accommodate the pit, out of pit box cut spoil placement and associated infrastructure. The impacts will be mitigated by consideration of a combination of:

- revegetation trials using species comprising the affected ERE;
- maximising retention of the ecological communities through detailed mine planning; and
- establishment of management strategies for target species and additional site specific studies.

The final land use is envisioned as being a mix of grazing country with some areas reserved for native flora and fauna communities.



Other impacts on land, water, noise, air, cultural heritage and community will be managed in accordance with that currently practiced in other areas of the Norwich Park Project. Norwich Park has significant experience and success in managing environmental impacts in similar environments throughout the overall Norwich Park mine area, and has operated under an accredited ISO14001 Environmental Management System since 2003, and has been recognised as a Performance Category 1 mine by the EPA since May 2005.

### **Affected and Interested Persons**

Consultation will occur with stakeholders including one on one discussions with affected and interested parties as required. Site visits will be conducted as appropriate, and the workforce and community will be kept informed through a newsletter.