

## Mt Arthur Coal to expand

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An extra 1600 jobs will be created on-site at Muswellbrook's Mt Arthur Coal mine after its expansion was given the green light by the state government on September 24.

Mine owner BHP Billiton welcomed the approval of the mine's consolidation project, which is expected to generate more than \$600 million of annual economic activity for the local economy.

The company could increase its production by eight million tonnes a year, up to 32 million tonnes.

BHP Billiton's president of NSW energy coal Scott Sullivan said approval of the environmental assessment would allow Mt Arthur Coal to uncover additional coal reserves in the future within BHP Billiton's current mining leases.

"Through this project Mt Arthur Coal could create up to 1600 new local jobs at peak production, in addition to the 990 full-time jobs at the mine today," he said.

"The Mt Arthur Coal consolidation project is expected to generate more than \$900 million annually in additional direct and indirect economic return to the NSW economy, with more than \$600 million of this in Muswellbrook, Aberdeen and surrounding communities."

Earlier this year Muswellbrook Shire Council had resolved not to support the mine's expansion unless the company agreed to significantly upgrade Thomas Mitchell Drive.

The company has now committed \$7 million to the upgrade, as well as \$120,000 a year for the road's maintenance.

Muswellbrook Shire mayor Martin Rush said it was a good result.

"Council resolved all of its issues with the mine prior to the department of planning announcement (of approval) last week," Cr Rush said.

"Council had fought very hard for a full upgrade of Thomas Mitchell Drive and to its credit BHP Billiton came to the party on that issue.

"The mine will see 104 local young men and women apprenticed into the mine during the consent and will contribute \$500,000 each year, for every year of the mine's life, to social and hard infrastructure."

Further information about the environmental assessment and conditions of approval can be found at [www.planning.nsw.gov.au](http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au).



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