

Coal giant eyes region

MELISSA LYONS

Shenhua may bid on station



DESIRABLE: A second power station is planned to supplement the one at Bayswater.

CHINESE coal giant Shenhua Energy has had its eye on the Hunter, confirming it was in talks with the NSW Government to build a new power station in the region.

Details emerged yesterday from Shenhua representative Joe Clayton that the company, a subsidiary of the Chinese Government, had been looking to make a bid on Bayswater B power station.

The power station, near Muswellbrook, and a second power station

at Mount Piper, near Lithgow, were given concept approval from the State Government in March.

"When they were looking at putting the [Bayswater B] power station out to tender we were looking at it," Mr Clayton said yesterday.

"We are always looking for opportunities for energy."

Greens MP Lee Rhiannon said news that the Chinese company was negotiating with the NSW Government was "another blow to the region".

"A new power station risks compromising residents' health and increasing greenhouse gas emissions for the sole aim of boosting the profits of a Chinese corporation," she said.

"The State Government must come clean and disclose what discussions have been held with China Shenhua Energy."

Confirmation Shenhua Energy would still bid on the project when tenders were called for could not be made yesterday after the company went to ground and refused to make further comments.

Mineral Resources Minister Ian

MacDonald said Shenhua had had talks with power companies about building a power station in the Hunter "a few years ago".

But he said there had been no recent discussions and nothing had been proposed or agreed to.

"No deals of any kind have been made," he said. "Any proposal for any power station anywhere in NSW would need to follow due process, a development application would need to be lodged with the Department of Planning."

The Department of Planning said there were no proposals before the minister.

Hunter high in asthma rates

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pollution monitoring.

The panel is also using health data to examine the region's incidence of cardiac and respiratory illness, which may lead to further studies.

Singleton GP Tuan Au, who has been calling for the Government to investigate the high incidence of asthma in the Upper Hunter, said the results were not surprising.

"The next step is what are we going to do with these statistics?" he said.

"We need more education for parents not to smoke in front of their kids but most importantly we need to find out why [asthma incidence] is so high."

Public health physician David Durrheim said the results could not be localised to a specific local government area.

He said multiple environmental factors in rural areas contribute to the exacerbation of asthma conditions.

These include agriculture, drought, bushfires, mining and industry and seasonal pollens.

"All of these factors are



COPING: Jed Martin uses his puffer while his brother Jesse and mother Shelley look on yesterday.

— Picture by Dean Osland

Jed takes bouts in his stride

FOR a budding runner like Jed Martin, asthma can make things hard.

The sporty Raymond Terrace nine-year-old recently missed his school cross country trials because of a bout of wheeziness on the day.

"As soon as he gets home from school, he and his older brother Jesse are down the park running around,"

Jed's mother Shelley Martin said.

"[But] the last couple of weeks Jed's been a bit prone to asthma. When he gets it he wakes up through the night because it can be a bit hard to breathe."

Mrs Martin said she had not noticed any change in Jed's asthma outside the Hunter but the weather sometimes increased the symptoms.

"With Jed it seems to be really seasonal. Autumn and spring are the worst," she said.

Jed was admitted to hospital just once due to asthma before he was diagnosed but it has since been manageable, Mrs Martin said.

— Matt Carr

present in the Hunter New England Health Area and could contribute to report findings," he said.

The report also contains disturbing statistics on overweight and obese children.

The region had the highest percentage (23.8) of overweight 2- to 8-year olds, but the eighth-highest percentage (21.8) of overweight 9- to 15-year olds.

By comparison, the region

has the ninth-highest percentage (11) of obese 2- to 8-year olds and the second highest percentage (6.5) of obese 9- to 15-year-olds.

Good for Kids Good for Life program director John

Wiggers said \$7.5 million had been provided to tackle childhood obesity in the region.

He said the Good for Kids Good for Life project helped children to be physically act-

ive and to develop healthy eating patterns and that it would reach all children between birth and 15 years living in the Hunter, New England and Lower Mid-North Coast regions.

Federal plan triggers state retreat

By JULIEANNE STRACHAN

THE NSW Government has scrapped plans for a new mining tax that would have sent money directly back to the Hunter Region for infrastructure projects.

Mining bosses were still fuming yesterday over the Federal Government's proposed 40 per cent tax on mining super profits, warning it would hurt Australian families and jobs.

The Hunter's calls for a greater share of the state's mining wealth appeared close to hitting pay dirt last month, with the NSW Government seriously considering a shake-up of coal royalties as a pre-election sweetener.

THE stoush between the Federal Government and the resources industry is getting dirty but Prime Minister Kevin Rudd insists he won't be put off his plan to tax miners' super profits.

And as the industry and Government traded blows over the merits of the tax, the Coalition made its policy

But the Federal Government's announcement has triggered a backlash.

NSW Treasurer Eric Roozendaal has released a statement ruling out any new mining taxes as part of this year's state budget.

"The NSW Government recognises the importance of the mining sector to the

opposition official.

Opposition Leader Tony Abbott confirmed the Coalition would vote against the Government's latest "great big new tax on everything" when it came before parliament.

Mining heavyweights say the tax will jeopardise jobs and projects.

state's economy - and wants to provide certainty to the sector," Mr Roozendaal said yesterday.

Hunter Business Chamber chief executive Peter Shinnick said it would help to ease jitters in the industry.

Tax plan 'threat'
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