



# Ensham vows no open cut mining on Nogoia River central floodplain

## AgForce welcomes revised plan to reduce impacts on health of river ecosystem

By DI STANLEY

THE Nogoia River floodplain will be preserved from future mining impacts by Ensham Resources as it moves into the approval stages of taking its coal operation underground.

A supplementary report to the 2007 Environmental Impact Statement has been submitted to the Queensland Government outlining a revised mining methodology for the Ensham Central Project.

Ensham chief executive officer Peter Westerhuis said the report was the result of a trifecta of learning at senior management level taking in market conditions, lessons from the 2008 flooding event and community feedback.

"The key change to the plan is our decision not to access the coal beneath the central floodplain north of the Nogoia River through open cut mining," he told the *Central Queensland News*.

"The decision results in a reduction in the total area of open cut mining of 830 hectares compared to the original proposal.

"Access the coal resource in this area by using underground mining techniques will avoid disturbance in the anabranch of the

Nogoia River and avoids the need to construct an additional 12 kilometres of levee banks."

Mr Westerhuis said after 15 years of open cut operations, bord and pillar and longwall mining methods would be utilised for the next phase of Ensham's mine life, which would "significantly reduce the environmental impact of our planned development".

Independent investigations contained in the supplementary report included studies into the effect of the mine's operation on the form and function of the floodplain, groundwater impacts and air quality, he added.

"Our revised methodology has positive implications for the local community," Mr Westerhuis said.

"It means we will help secure the long-term future of around 3000 direct and indirect jobs and supports ongoing investment in the region."

A brochure being sent to landowners and stakeholders in the Emerald region describes the supplementary report as demonstrating the revised mining methodologies will have a lower environmental impact compared to the mining methods proposed in the original EIS.

AgForce vice-president Ian Burnett yesterday welcomed Ensham's change of heart.

"From our point of view, any change in plans that is going to reduce the impacts on the floodplain, we see as a favourable move," said Mr Burnett.

"With the original Ensham Central Project, there were proposals to interfere with the anabranch of the Nogoia River and have additional levee banks, so by doing this revised plan, the potential changes on the floodplain are minimised.

"This certainly is a responsible action from the mining company, and welcomed by the farming sector.

"Landholders and our members are still concerned with developments on the floodplain, existing and proposed, which could have potential impacts."

The report will be on public display for 20 business days. Copies are at the DERM Emerald office and will also be available on the Ensham website.

Mr Westerhuis said stakeholders are encouraged to make submissions.