

Mining company signs option on Mount Penny

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The Bylong Valley Protection Alliance (BVPA) is dismayed that Australian stock exchange (ASX)- listed company White Energy has signed an option to acquire the Mount Penny coal development.

On Tuesday it was announced Cascade Coal Pty Limited had offered White Energy the option to acquire 100 per cent of Cascade for \$486 million plus assumed liabilities of \$14 million.

If transaction proceeds, White Energy will own the 173.7 million tonne coal resource at Mount Penny.

The ASX announcement said Cascade had already secured land and water rights to develop Mt Penny's first open-cut pit.

Interim BVPA secretary Craig Shaw said the "real shocker" was learning how far plans have advanced.

"We now find out they've got 'conceptual development plan approval' for the project and are looking to commence production in 2013," he said.

"It's incandescent testimony to just how badly the whole exploration, planning and approvals process in New South Wales is [and it] sucks that we can be right next door and kept completely in the dark.

"The NSW government and the mining industry itself bang on about 'community consultation' and 'engagement', but the whole process remains stubbornly opaque.

"The little guy is left playing mushroom – that is, being kept in the dark and being fed the proverbial."

Mr Shaw also expressed his frustration with the lack of strategic planning for new mine developments in the State.

"There have been calls for a proper strategy for years now and they're only getting stronger," he said.

"NSW Farmers [Association] wants a moratorium on new mine development, Mid-Western Regional Council wants the same – everyone wants to see the overall plan, but there isn't one.

"It's complete and utter madness."