



Planning,  
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Environment

# Vickery Extension Project

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## IPC Public Hearing

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Energy, Resources and Compliance  
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# Assessment Process

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## Role of the Department of Planning & Environment

- *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*
- Whole of Government Assessment – State Significant Projects

## Role of the Independent Planning Commission (IPC)

- Consent Authority > 50 Objections
- Public Hearings – Multi-Stage
- Determination of DA

## Comprehensive Assessment Process – over 4 years (SEARs 2016)



# Approvals & Licences

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- State Development Consent – EP&A Act
- Commonwealth – EPBC Act
  - Assessed under Bilateral Agreement with NSW
  - Approval from the Minister for the Environment
- Other Approvals
  - Mining Lease – Mining Act
  - EPA Licence – POEO Act
  - Water Licences – Water Management Act
  - Road Permits – Roads Act (TfNSW & Councils)

# Strategic Context

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## History of Mining in the locality

- Exploration Licences – since 1970s
- Vickery Coal Mine – O/C & U/G - 1986 to 1998
- Canyon Coal Mine – O/C - 2000 to 2009
- Mining ceased in 2009

## Vickery Coal Project - approved in 2014

- Open cut coal mine – 30 years + 4.5 Mt a year
- Physically commenced in June 2019
- Mining has not yet commenced
- Approval remains valid and impacts do not need to be re-assessed

# Vickery Extension Project

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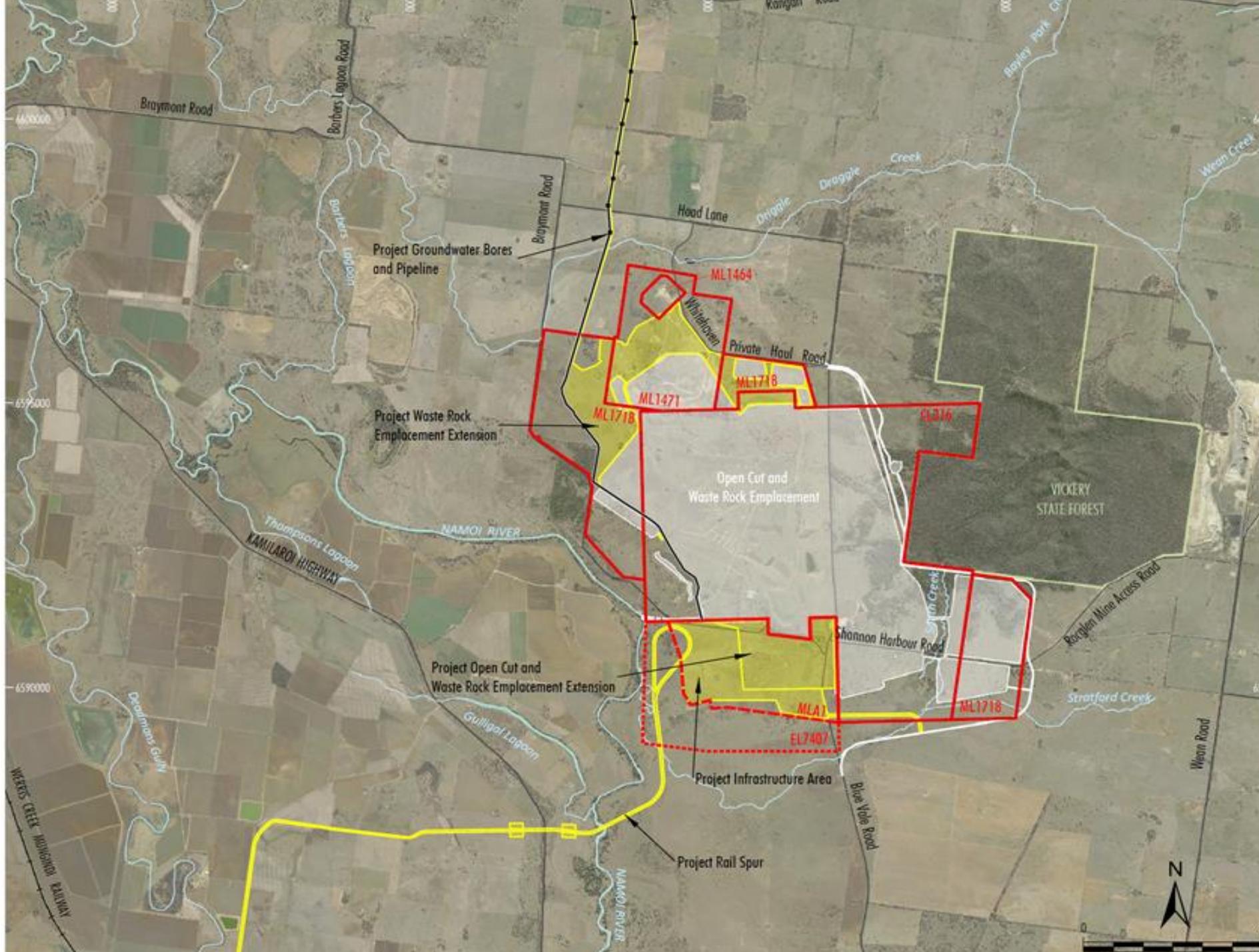
- Coal Resource – 135 to 168 Mt
- Mining Rate – 4.5 to 10 Mtpa
- Mine Life – 30 to 25 years
- New Infrastructure
  - Rail Spur (confirmed on piers)
  - Coal Processing Plant
  - Borefield
- Disturbance Area – 20% increase
- Western Emplacement Area – larger area but same height
- Eastern Emplacement Area – removed
- Final Voids – new voids 2 to 1
- Jobs – 250 to 450 during operations
- Capital Investment - \$461 to \$607 million



# Approved Project vs Vickery Extension Project



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# Community Engagement

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- EIS Exhibition – 13 Sept to 25 October 2018 (42 days)
- Community Information Session
- Meetings with Landowners/ Special Interest Groups
- Community Consultative Committee
- 560 community and interest group submissions
  - 345 supported (62%)
  - 201 objected (36%)
- Advice from 12 Government Agencies
- Submissions from Gunnedah and Narrabri Councils
- None of the Agencies object to the project + Consultation on Conditions
- Gunnedah Council does not object - Narrabri Council has now objected

# Key Issues

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- Water Resources
  - Namoi River
  - Aquifers
  - Flooding
- Amenity Impacts
  - Noise
  - Air Quality
  - Cumulative Impacts
- Biodiversity
  - Impacts on Koalas
- Final Land Form
  - Final Voids
  - Loss of Agricultural Land
- Social/Economic
  - Jobs
  - Community Benefits
- Other Issues
  - Heritage
  - Greenhouse Gas Emissions
  - Traffic and Transport



# Expert Advice - Govt

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- Commonwealth Independent Expert Scientific Committee (IESC) Advice
  - Groundwater, Surface Water, Groundwater dependent ecosystems
- Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
  - Biodiversity Conservation Division – Biodiversity, Aboriginal heritage, Flooding
  - Water Division/ NRAR – Groundwater, Surface Water, Water Licensing
- EPA – Air, Noise, Water Pollution, Waste, Contamination
- Regional NSW
  - Resources Regulator - Rehabilitation
  - MEG - Resource Utilisation and Royalties
  - NSW Fisheries – Aquatic ecology
  - NSW Agriculture – Agricultural resources
- Department of Premiers and Cabinet – NSW Heritage – Historic heritage
- Transport for NSW – Traffic, Rail
- NSW Health
- Siding Spring Observatory

# Expert Advice - Independent

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- Groundwater - Mr Hugh Middlemiss, Hydrogeologic
- Surface Water - Mr Martin Giles, BMT
- Flooding - Ms Erin Askew, WMA Water
- Economics - Mr Gavan Dwyer, Marsden Jacobs Associates

All advice from government and independent experts is attached to the Department's assessment report and available on our website.

# Water Resources

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- *Additional Assessment* - further modelling and sensitivity analysis completed
- *Alluvium* – negligible impact as open cut would be located in deeper strata and outside Namoi River alluvium
- *Inflows* – less than approved project – average 0.9 vs 1.2 ML/day from porous rock aquifer
- *Drawdown in Alluvium* – less than 1 m drawdown beyond mining areas, and 0.2 metres at nearest private bore
- *Licences* – sufficient licences for water take under Water Sharing Plans, even in dry conditions
- *Policy* - complies with *NSW Aquifer Interference Policy* and recently gazetted *Floodplain Management Plan for the Upper Namoi Valley Floodplain 2019*
- *IESC* - recommendations considered and incorporated into recommended conditions
- *Government & Independent Experts* - assessment fit for purpose and support proposed conditions

# Recommended Conditions

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- *Water Supply* - ensure it has sufficient water supply for all stages of the development and adjust operations to match supply
- *Compensatory Water* - provide compensatory water supply to privately-owned landowners if directly impacted as a result of mining operations - burden of proof resting with Whitehaven
- *Discharges* - comply with discharge limits set in any EPL or the requirements of the POEO Act
- *Flooding* – design rail spur line to comply with *Floodplain Management Plan for the Upper Namoi Valley Floodplain 2019*
- *Performance Measures* - comply with a range of water management performance measures including ensuring negligible impacts on alluvial aquifers
- *Water Management Plan* - incorporating water balance, surface water management plan and groundwater management plan in consultation with DPIE Water and the EPA.

# Amenity

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- *Air Quality* - air emissions predicted to comply with applicable criteria in *EPA Approved Methods* at all sensitive receivers
- *Noise* - noise criteria in *EPA Noise Policy for Industry* would be exceeded at 5 residences (3 landholdings) to southwest of mine:
  - moderate to significant exceedances at 2 residences on one property (existing acquisition rights)
  - minor exceedances (1 to 2 dBA) at additional 3 residences (seeking agreements)
- Sleep disturbance, rail noise, blasting and cumulative emissions would comply with applicable criteria
- *EPA* - is satisfied that the assessments undertaken in accordance with the relevant guidelines and supports recommended conditions

# Recommended Conditions

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- *Acquisition Rights* – retain voluntary acquisition rights for one property (as per existing conditions)
- *Strict Criteria* - comply with strict noise, dust and blasting criteria
- *Monitoring* – implement a real-time monitoring system for noise, dust and blasting
- *Further Mitigation*
  - acoustic review of the rail spur line during detailed design
  - attenuated mining fleet when production exceeds 3.5 Mtpa
  - landscaping treatments or vegetation screens to reduce the visibility of the mining operations and infrastructure from affected residences
- *Management Plans* - prepare and implement Noise, Blast and Air Quality Management Plans, in consultation with the EPA

# Biodiversity

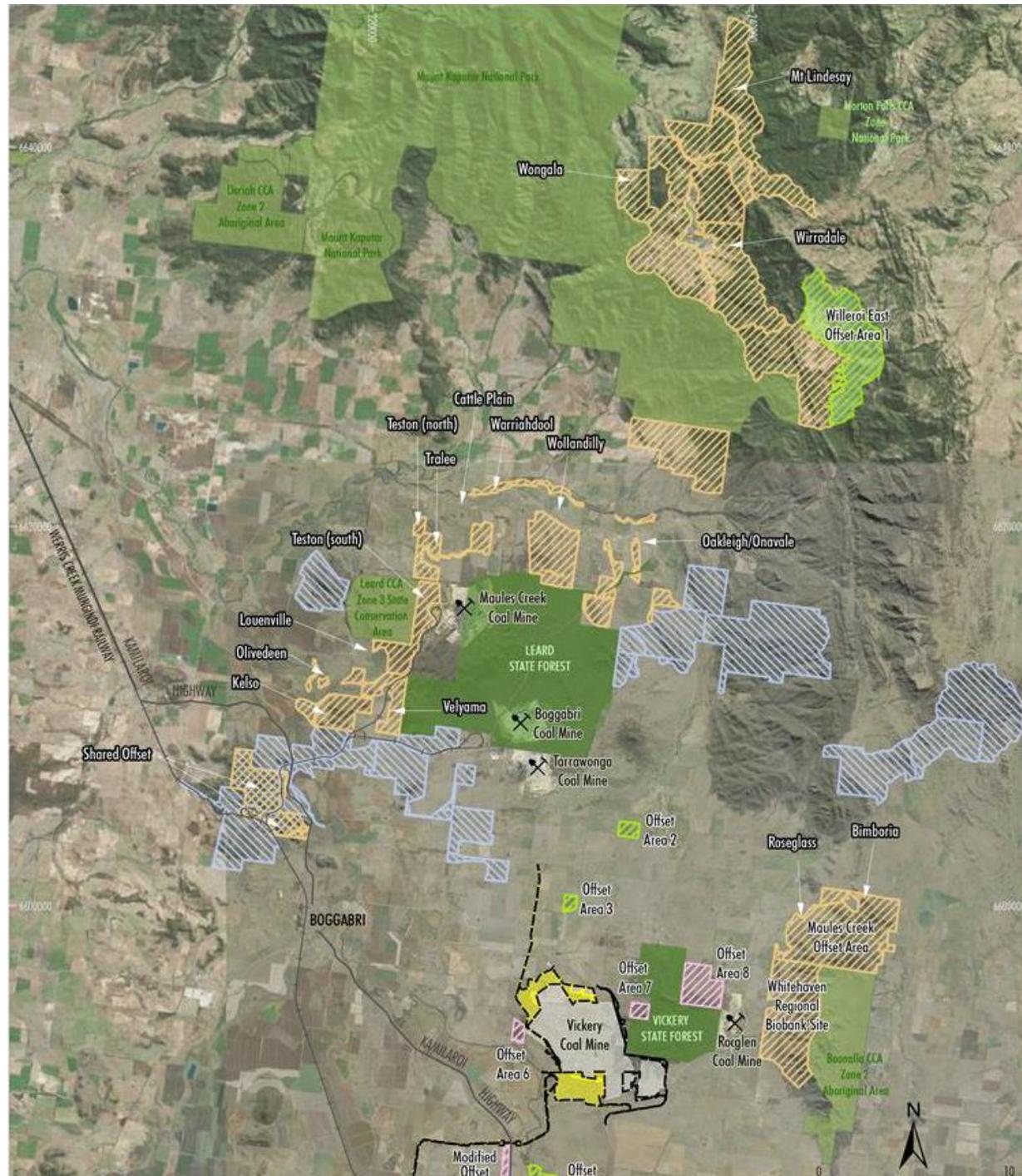
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- 580 hectares of additional native vegetation clearing
- 13% native woodland with remainder derived native grassland
- No EECs or threatened flora species identified
- No Koalas identified on the mine site, but occur in the locality
- NSW *Biodiversity Offset Policy for Major Projects*
  - ~1,000 hectares of mine rehabilitation
  - ~1,000 hectares of additional land-based offsets
  - over 5,000 hectares of strategic offsets with approved project in the region to enhance habitat connectivity
- *BCD* - satisfied that assessment has been undertaken in accordance with applicable policy, and supports recommended conditions

# Regional Biodiversity Offsets



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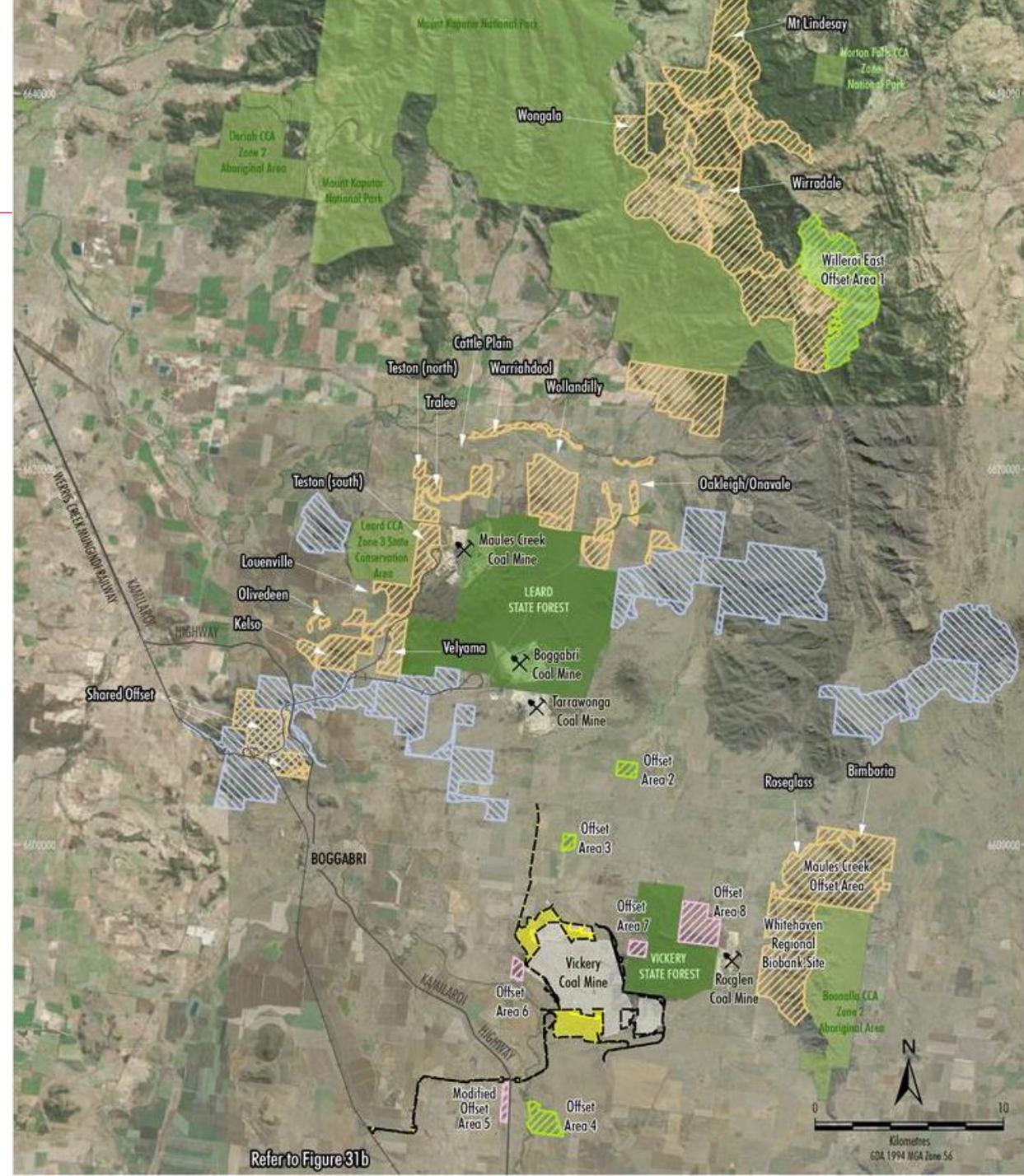


# Recommended Conditions

- *Existing Offsets* - implement existing biodiversity strategy for the Approved Project, including required conservation bonds and security mechanisms
- *Additional Offsets* – retire additional credits in accordance with *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*, including credits for Koalas
- *Management Plans* – in consultation with BCD
  - Biodiversity Management Plan
  - Koala Plan of Management



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# Final Landform

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- *Final Void*
  - reduction in the number of new voids from 2 to 1
  - inflows and catchment of final void would be less than approved project
  - final void would remain a groundwater sink and over time become saline
- *Final Land Use*
  - site generally classified as Class 3 and Class 4 land and is used primarily for grazing
  - rehabilitation to woodland instead of agriculture to achieve regional biodiversity conservation outcomes
- *Resource Regulator* - satisfied with final landform and supports recommended conditions

# Recommended Conditions

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- *Progressive Rehabilitation* - undertake progressive rehabilitation over time
- *Ecological Rehabilitation* – restore biodiversity and ecosystem values on the mine site
- *Strict Criteria* - rehabilitate the site in accordance with strict rehabilitation objectives
- *Rehabilitation Strategy* - including 5 yearly review of the final landform and final void, in consultation with councils and NSW government agencies
- *Management Plan* - Rehabilitation Management Plan in accordance with conditions set in any Mining Lease

# Other Issues

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- *Kurrumbede Homestead*
  - approximately 1.2 km from mining area
  - not listed on heritage register, but associated with Dorothea MacKellar
  - engineering assessment to confirm appropriate blasting criteria to avoid any damage
  - heritage management plan, including maintain access during mining
  - measures supported by NSW Heritage Council
- *Greenhouse Gases*
  - contribution to climate change acknowledged
  - need to balance with benefits of the project
  - predominantly metallurgical coal for steel-making (70%)
  - scope 1 and 2 emissions to be accounted for in Australia (~0.03% of Australia's commitment under Paris Agreement)
  - scope 3 to be accounted for by other countries in accordance with Paris Agreement



# Other Issues

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- *Traffic and Transport*
  - no significant impacts on the road network
  - remove coal trucks from public road network towards Gunnedah
  - strict requirements not to use key local roads in the area, including Braymont Road
  - road maintenance contributions to Councils
  - Traffic Management Plan – in consultation with road authorities

# Benefits of the Project

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- Up to 500 construction jobs (additional 450)
- Up to 450 operational jobs (additional 200)
- Net economic benefit to NSW of \$1.2 billion (NPV)
- Royalties to the NSW Government of \$671 million (NPV)
- Increase contributions to Councils by \$3.2 million (from \$7.5 to \$10.7 million) for community projects in the region

# Summary

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- The Department has completed an comprehensive assessment of the project in accordance with the requirements of the EP&A Act over the last 2 years.
- This has included extensive community consultation and detailed advice from government agencies and independent experts.
- The Department fully acknowledges that some members of the community remain strongly opposed to the project, and that the project would result in additional environmental and amenity impacts.
- However, based on all the expert advice, the Department considers that the environmental and amenity impacts of the project are not significantly greater than those associated with the Approved Project.
- The Department has recommended a comprehensive range of conditions to ensure compliance with relevant standards to protect the local community and the environment.

# Summary (Con't)

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- The Department also considers that the project would provide major economic and social benefits for the region and to NSW as a whole, including direct capital investment of \$607 million, up to 450 jobs during operations, and over \$10 million in contributions towards community projects.
- In the recent Future of Coal Statement, the NSW Government has acknowledged that the coal industry has a finite life as we transition to a less carbon intensive economy.
- However, the Statement also confirms the important role of the mining industry to the NSW economy, and the strong international demand for our export coal over the next 20 to 30 years.
- This project would produce both metalliferous and thermal coal for the export market over the next 25 years and is therefore well placed to contribute to the strategic economic benefits identified by the government in accordance with the Coal Statement.

# Summary (Con't)

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- Finally, I can confirm that the Department has carefully weighed the impacts of the project against the significance of the resource and the socio-economic benefits it would generate.
- The Department's assessment concludes that the Project achieves a reasonable and appropriate balance between maximising the recovery of a high-quality coal resource of State significance and minimising the potential impacts on surrounding land users and the environment as far as is practicable.
- On balance, the Department considers that the project is in the public interest and is approvable, subject to the recommended conditions of consent.

# Questions ??

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