



Approval

Hunter Valley Operations – State approved mining, Hunter Valley, NSW (EPBC 2016/7640)

This decision is made under sections 130(1) and 133 of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Proposed action

person to whom the approval is granted Coal & Allied Operations Pty Ltd

proponent's ACN (if applicable) ACN 000 023 656

proposed action The continuation of open cut coal mining operations in areas that were previously approved by the State after the commencement of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, 1999* within the Hunter Valley Operations (HVO) mine complex, located 24 km north west of Singleton, NSW [See EPBC Act referral 2016/7640].

Approval decision

Controlling Provision	Decision
Listed threatened species and communities (sections 18 & 18A)	Approved

conditions of approval

This approval is subject to the conditions specified below.

expiry date of approval

This approval has effect until 31 December 2030.

Decision-maker

name and position Mike Smith
Acting Assistant Secretary
Assessments (NSW, ACT) and Fuel Branch

signature

date of decision

10.10.16.

Conditions attached to the approval

1. The **person taking the action** must not clear more than 54.4 hectares of the Central Hunter Valley Eucalypt Forest and woodland (CHVEF) ecological community from the Riverview Pit and 6.6 ha of the CHVEF ecological community from within the West Pit and must limit all vegetation clearing to within the project disturbance boundaries defined at Schedule 1, Figures 1 - 4.
2. The **person taking the action** must prepare and submit a Vegetation Clearance Plan (VCP) for the **Minister's** approval to mitigate impacts of the action on the CHVEF ecological community, the Regent Honeyeater (*Anthochaera phrygia*), Swift Parrot (*Lathamus discolor*) and the Green and Golden Bell Frog (*Litoria aurea*). The VCP must include:
 - a. Clear delineation of vegetation to be cleared, as per the disturbance boundary shown in Schedule 1 Figures 1 – 4, and vegetation that is to be retained.
 - b. Pre-clearance survey methods, which must include but not be limited to the following requirements:
 - i. A **qualified ecologist** must undertake a pre-clearance survey within 24 hours prior to the removal of potential foraging, nesting or breeding habitat for the Regent Honeyeater or foraging habitat for the Swift Parrot in areas identified in Schedule 2, Figures 1 - 5.
 - ii. If during pre-clearance surveys, Regent Honeyeater or Swift Parrot individuals are identified within the clearance area the VCP must specify the use of a two stage clearing protocol where **non-habitat trees** are cleared 24 hours prior to any **habitat trees** being cleared, to encourage fauna to move out of a habitat area.
 - iii. In the event an **active Regent Honeyeater nest** is identified during pre-clearance surveys, vegetation clearing and overburden removal within 100 m of the active nest should be delayed up until the **Regent Honeyeater nest is no longer actively being used**.
 - iv. A qualified ecologist must undertake pre-clearance surveys within a 2 week period prior to the removal of potential breeding habitat for the Green and Golden Bell Frog. Surveys are to be undertaken within all potential breeding habitat areas identified in Schedule 2, Figure 2 as well as a 200m buffer around each potential breeding habitat area.
 - v. Pre-clearance survey methods for the Green and Golden Bell Frog must meet the survey effort requirements for the Green and Golden Bell Frog stipulated in the *Survey Guidelines for Australia's threatened frog (2010) Commonwealth of Australia*.
 - vi. In the event Green and Golden Bell Frog individuals, metamorphs or tadpoles are located during pre-clearance surveys, they are to be handled and translocated in accordance with the *Hygiene protocols for the control of diseases in frogs (2008) Department of Environment and Climate Change (NSW)*.

- c. Include measures to avoid, suppress and control the spread of plant pathogens (such as *Phytophthora cinnamomi*) and chytrid fungus that may degrade habitat for **protected matters**.

The action must not commence until the Vegetation Clearance Plan, required by Condition 2, has been approved by the **Minister**.

3. The approved Vegetation Clearance Plan must be implemented.
4. To compensate for residual impacts to **protected matters** the **person taking the action** must, under a **legally binding agreement**, secure in perpetuity 405.8 ha at the **Wandewoi Biodiversity Area**, described in 4(a)(b) and (c) within three (3) years from the date of this approval. The **Wandewoi Biodiversity Area** must include:
 - a. 405.8 hectares of the CHVEF ecological community;
 - b. 175.8 hectares of foraging habitat for the Swift Parrot; and
 - c. 40 ha of regenerating foraging habitat for the Swift Parrot.
5. To compensate for residual significant impacts to 22.7 ha of Class A condition CHVEF from the Riverview Pit extension area the **person taking the action** must identify a **direct offset site** that meets requirements of the **EPBC Act Offset Policy** and secure the offset in perpetuity under a **legally binding agreement** within 12 months from the date of this approval.
6. To compensate for residual significant impacts to 68.4 ha of breeding and foraging habitat for the Regent Honeyeater the **person taking the action** must identify a **direct offset site** that meets requirements of the **EPBC Act Offset Policy** and secure the offset in perpetuity under a **legally binding agreement** within 12 months from the date of this approval.
7. To compensate for residual significant impacts to 2.6 ha of breeding habitat and 102.7 ha of foraging habitat for the Green and Golden Bell Frog the **person taking the action** must identify an **offset package** that meets requirements of the **EPBC Act Offset Policy** and secure a **direct offset site** in perpetuity under a **legally binding agreement** within 12 months from the date of this approval.
8. Prior to securing the direct offsets required by Conditions 4, 5, 6 and 7 the **direct offset sites** and **legally binding agreements** must be agreed to by the **Minister**.
9. The action cannot continue for more than 12 months from the date of the **commencement of the action** unless the **direct offset sites** required by Conditions 5, 6 and 7 have been secured in perpetuity under a **legally binding agreement** by the **person taking the action**.
10. Within six (6) months from the **commencement of the action** the **person taking the action** must prepare and submit an Offset Strategy for the **Minister's** approval. The Offset Strategy must specify the development of the offset package and how **direct offset sites** required by Conditions 5, 6 and 7 will be identified, secured and managed in perpetuity. The Offset Strategy must:
 - a. Describe the development of the offset package and identify the proposed **direct offset sites** required by Conditions 5, 6 and 7, include a detailed description of the **direct offset sites** and demonstrate how the **direct offset sites** meet the **EPBC Act Offset Policy** and provide an adequate offset for the residual significant impacts to **protected matters**.

- b. Include proposed timeframes in which the **direct offset sites** will be secured by a **legal binding agreement** and a detailed description of how the **legally binding agreement** will secure the **direct offset sites** in perpetuity.
- c. Proposed measures for the long term management of the **direct offset sites**.

The Offset Strategy approved by the **Minister** must be implemented.

11. For the protection of the CHVEF as well as habitat for the Regent Honeyeater, Swift Parrot and Green and Golden Bell Frog the **person taking the action** must prepare and submit a Biodiversity Offset Management Plan (BOMP) for the **Minister's** approval within 12 months from the date of this approval. At a minimum, the BOMP must:
 - a. Clearly identify the **direct offset sites** described in Conditions 4, 5, 6 and 7. This must include **offset attributes, shapefiles**, textual descriptions and maps to clearly define the location and boundaries of the **direct offset sites**.
 - b. Provide a description of the offset attributes for each **protected matter** and how the offset site meets the offset requirements under Conditions 4, 5, 6 and 7.
 - c. Provide a survey and description of the current condition (prior to any management activities) of the **direct offset sites** identified in Conditions 4, 5, 6 and 7.
 - d. Include detailed management actions, including regeneration and revegetation strategies to be undertaken at the **direct offset sites** to improve the ecological quality of these areas. The BOMP must also include:
 - (i) Management actions relating to improving habitat quality for **protected matters** including but not limited to: weed management, feral animal management, erosion and sediment control and fire management.
 - (ii) A description and timeframes that management measures would be implemented to improve the condition of CHVEF and habitat for the Regent Honeyeater, Swift Parrot and the Green and Golden Bell Frogs on the **direct offset sites**.
 - (iii) Performance and completion criteria for evaluating the management of the **direct offset sites**, and criteria for triggering remedial action.
 - (iv) A program to monitor and report on the effectiveness of these measures, and progress against the performance and completion criteria.
 - (v) A description of potential risks to the successful implementation of the plan, a description of the measures that will be implemented to mitigate against these risks and a description of the contingency measures that will be implemented if defined triggers arise.
 - (vi) Details of who would be responsible for monitoring, reviewing, and implementing the plan.
12. The BOMP approved by the **Minister** must be implemented at the **direct offset sites** required to meet the requirements of Conditions 5, 6 and 7 within three (3) months from the date the offsets are secured under a **legally binding agreement**.
13. To ensure timely compensation for significant impacts to **protected matters**, the approved BOMP must be implemented at the **Wandewoi Biodiversity Area** within one (1) month from the date the BOMP is approved, regardless if the **Wandewoi Biodiversity Area** has been secured under a **legally binding agreement**.

14. The person taking the action may choose to revise a management plan approved by the **Minister** without submitting it for approval under Section 143A of the **EPBC Act**, if the taking of the action in accordance with the revised management plan would not be likely to have a **new or increased impact** on a **protected matter** under the conditions of this approval. If the **person taking the action** makes this choice, they must:
 - a. notify the Department in writing that the approved management plan has been revised and provide the Department with an electronic copy of the revised management plan;
 - b. implement the revised management plan from the date that it is submitted to the Department; and
 - c. for the life of this approval, maintain a record of the reasons the person taking the action considers that taking the action in accordance with the revised management plan would not be likely to have a new or increased impact on a protected matter under the conditions of this approval.
15. The person taking the action may revoke its choice under Condition 14 at any time by notice to the **Department**. If the person taking the action revokes the choice to implement a revised management plan, without approval under Section 143A of the EPBC Act, the management plan approved by the **Minister** must be implemented.
16. Condition 14 does not apply if the revisions to the approved management plan include changes to offsets provided under the management plan in relation to a matter protected by a controlling provision for the action, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the **Minister**. This does not otherwise limit the circumstances in which the taking of the action in accordance with a revised management plan would, or would not, be likely to have **new or increased impacts**.
17. If the **Minister** gives a notice to the **person taking the action** that the **Minister** is satisfied that the taking of the action in accordance with the revised management plan would be likely to have a **new or increased impact** on a **protected matter** by the conditions of this approval, then:
 - a. Condition 14 does not apply, or ceases to apply, in relation to the revised management plan; and
 - b. The person taking the action must implement the previous management plan most recently approved by the Minister.

To avoid any doubt, this condition does not affect any operation of conditions 14, 15 and 16 in the period before the day the notice is given.

At the time of giving the notice the **Minister** may also notify that for a specified period of time that Condition 14 does not apply for one or more specified plans required under the approval.
18. If, at any time after 5 years from the date of this approval, the person taking the action has not **substantially commenced** the action, then the person taking the action must not **substantially commence** the action without the written agreement of the Minister.
19. Within 30 days after the commencement of the action, the person taking the action must advise the **Department** in writing of the actual date of **commencement**.
20. Unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the **Minister**, the person taking the action must publish all management plans, referred to in these conditions of approval on their website.

Each management plan must be published on the website within 1 month of being approved by the **Minister** or being submitted under Condition 14.a.

21. The person taking the action must maintain accurate records substantiating all activities associated with or relevant to the conditions of approval, including measures taken to implement the VCP, Offset Strategy and Biodiversity Offset Management Plan required by this approval, and make them available upon request to the **Department**. Such records may be subject to audit by the **Department** or an independent auditor in accordance with section 458 of the EPBC Act, or used to verify compliance with the conditions of approval. Summaries of audits will be posted on the Department's website. The results of audits may also be publicised through the general media.
22. Within three months of every 12 month anniversary of the commencement of the action, the person taking the action must publish a report on their website addressing compliance with each of the conditions of this approval, including implementation of any management plans as specified in the conditions. Documentary evidence providing proof of the date of publication and non-compliance with any of the conditions of this approval must be provided to the **Department** at the same time as the compliance report is published. Reports must remain on the website for the period this approval has effect. The approval holder may cease preparing and publishing compliance reports required by this condition with written agreement of the **Minister** to do so.
23. Upon the direction of the **Minister**, the **person taking the action** must ensure that an independent audit of compliance with the conditions of approval is conducted and a report submitted to the **Minister**. The independent auditor must be approved by the **Minister** prior to the commencement of the audit. Audit criteria must be agreed to by the **Minister** and the audit report must address the criteria to the satisfaction of the **Minister**.

Definitions

Active Regent Honeyeater nest is present when adult Regent Honeyeater birds are observed flying to and from, or sitting on a nest.

Commencement of the action means earthworks, vegetation removal or construction of any infrastructure, excluding fences and signage, associated with the proposed action.

Commencement does not include:

- physical disturbance necessary to undertake pre-clearance surveys or establish monitoring programs; or
- activities that are associated with mobilisation of plant and equipment, materials, machinery and personnel prior to the start of development only if such activities will have no adverse impact on matters of national environmental significance.

The **Department** means the Australian Government Department or any other agency that is responsible for administering the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth).

Direct offset site means an offset site that is required by Conditions 4, 5, 6, and 7 that will protect and improve habitat for the relevant **protected matter**.

EPBC Act means the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

EPBC Act offset Policy means the Australian Government Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water Population and Communities (2012) *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 Environmental Offsets Policy*. Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

Habitat trees are to be determined by qualified fauna spotter catcher or ecologist prior to vegetation clearance works.

Legally binding agreement means a legal mechanism that has been agreed by the Minister to secure and protect an offset site in perpetuity under NSW State legislation.

The **Minister** is the Commonwealth minister responsible for administering the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and includes a delegate of the **Minister**.

New or increased impact means a new or increased impact on any matter protected by the controlling provisions for the action, when compared to the plan that has been approved by the Minister.

Non-habitat trees are to be determined by qualified fauna spotter catcher or ecologist prior to vegetation clearance works.

Offset attributes means an '.xls' file capturing relevant attributes of the Offset site, including the EPBC reference ID number, the physical address of the offset site, coordinates of the boundary points in decimal degrees, the EPBC protected matters that the offset compensates for, any additional EPBC protected matters that are benefiting from the offset, and the size of the offset in hectares.

Offset package means a combination of direct and indirect offsets that has been approved by the Minister.

Person taking the action is the person to whom the approval is granted as identified on the approval notice for EPBC 2016/7640.

Protected matter/s means any matter protected under the provisions of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* for which this approval applies. These are: Central Hunter Valley eucalypt forest and woodland ecological community, Regent Honeyeater (*Anthochaera Phrygia*), Swift Parrot (*Lathamus discolor*) and the Green and Golden Bell Frog (*Litoria aurea*).

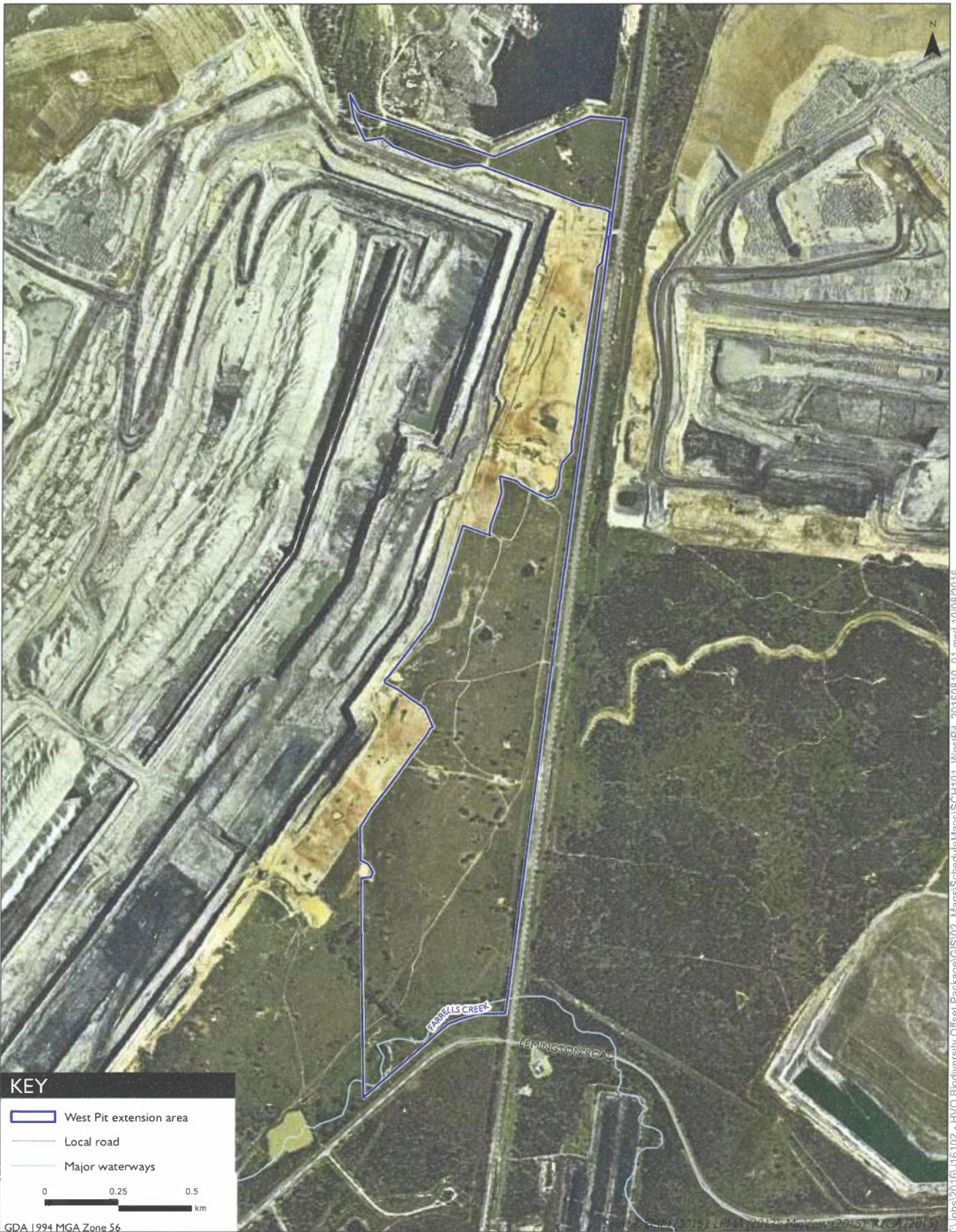
Regent Honeyeater nest is no longer actively being used is present when the young have left the nest and Regent Honeyeaters are no longer seen coming or going from the nest for 2 days.

Shapefiles means an ESRI Shapefile containing '.shp', '.shx' and '.dbf' files and other files capturing attributes of the Offset sites, including the shape, EPBC reference ID number and EPBC protected matters present at the relevant site. Attributes should also be captured in '.xls' format.

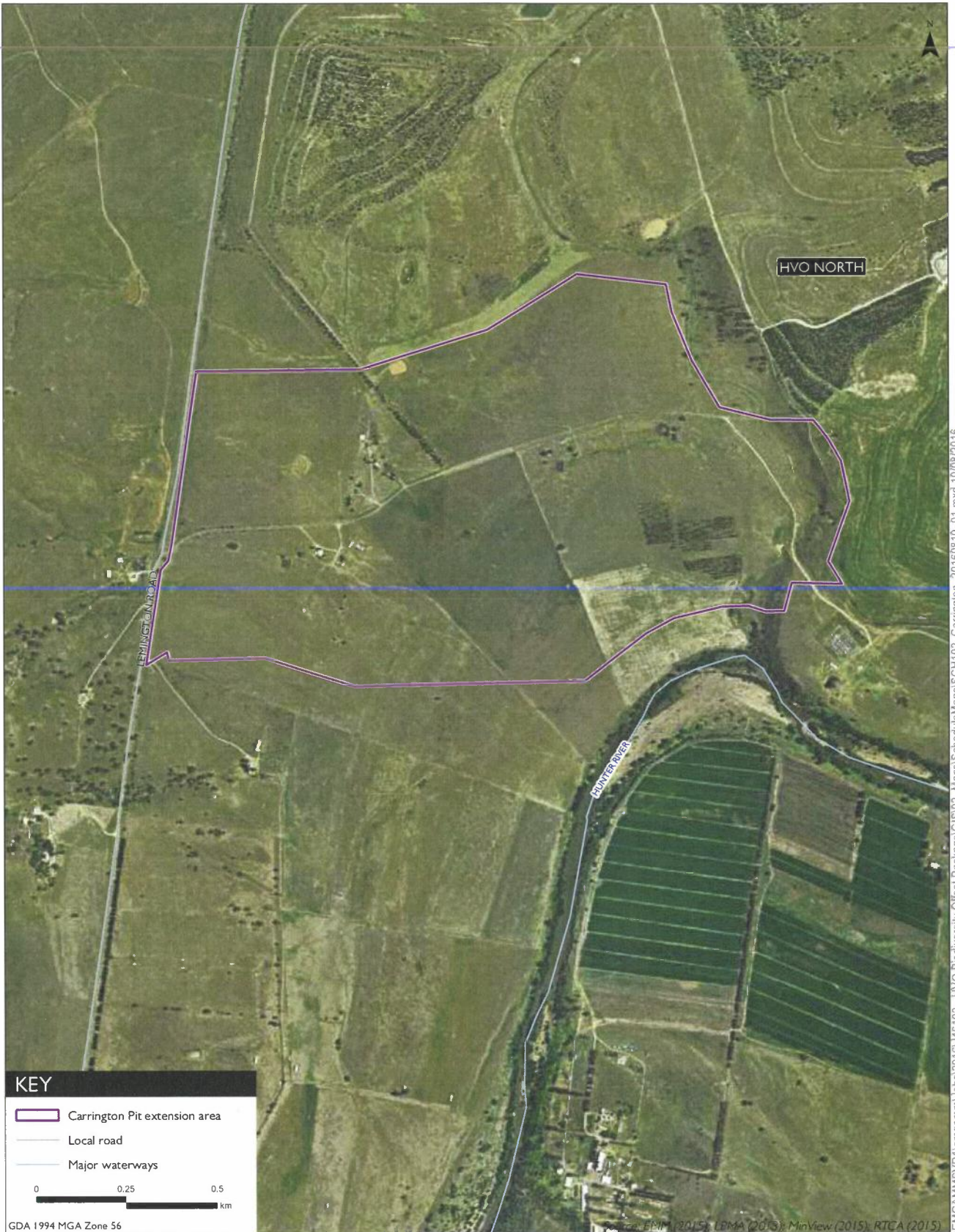
Substantially commence(d) the action means commencement of vegetation clearing.

Qualified ecologist means a person who has a minimum of 5 years experience in locating, capturing, handling, caring for and the safe release of native animals.

Wandewoi Biodiversity Area means the **direct offset site** identified in Schedule 3.



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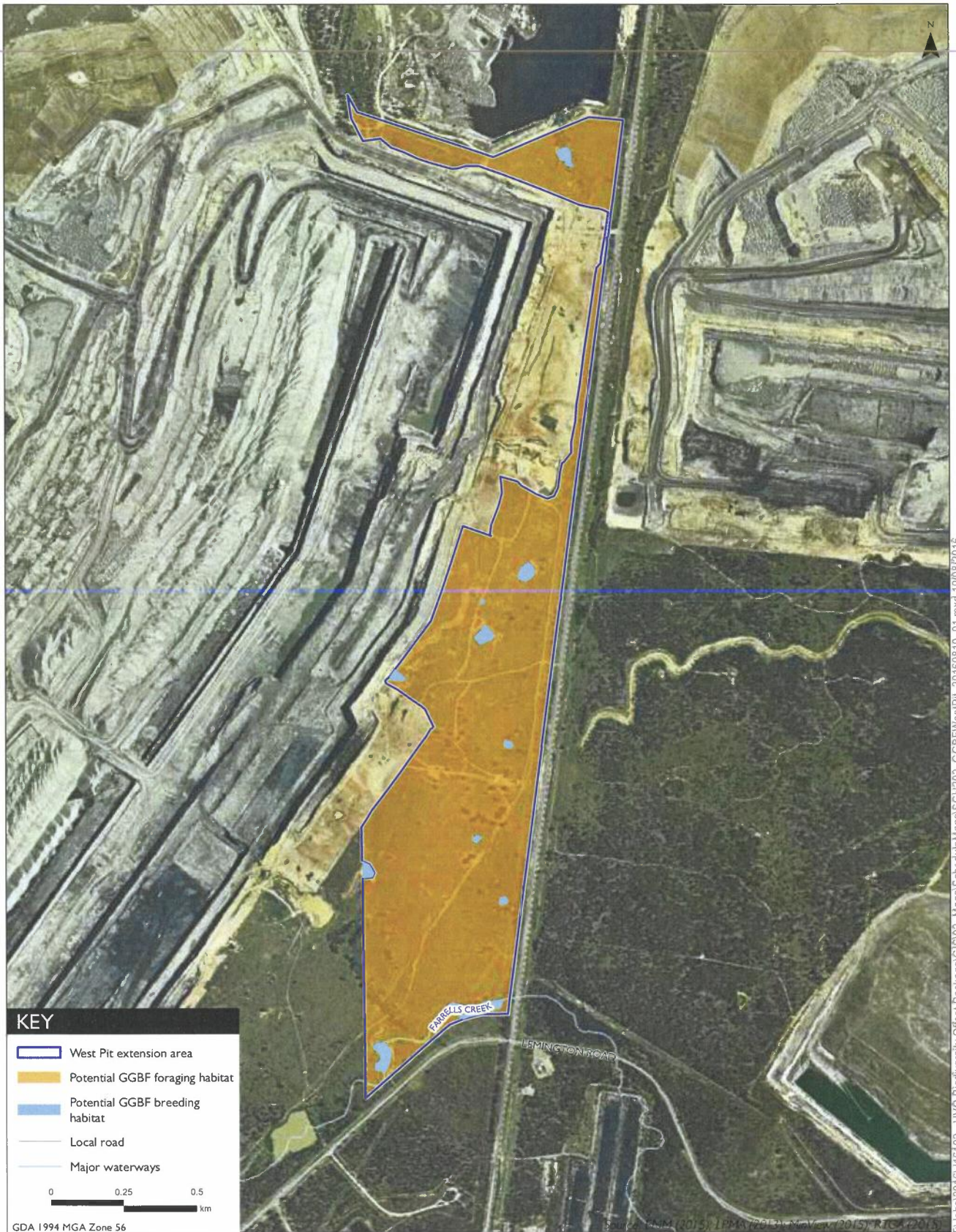
Cheshunt Pit extension area
Hunter Valley Operations - State-approved mining
Schedule 1

Figure 4



Potential Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot habitat in the Riverview Pit extension area
 Hunter Valley Operations - State-approved mining Schedule 2

Figure 1



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Potential Green and Golden Bell Frog in the West Pit extension area
 Hunter Valley Operations - State-approved mining Schedule 2
 Figure 2



Potential Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot habitat in the West Pit extension area
 Hunter Valley Operations - State-approved mining
 Schedule 2
 Figure 3



Potential Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot habitat in the Carrington Pit extension area

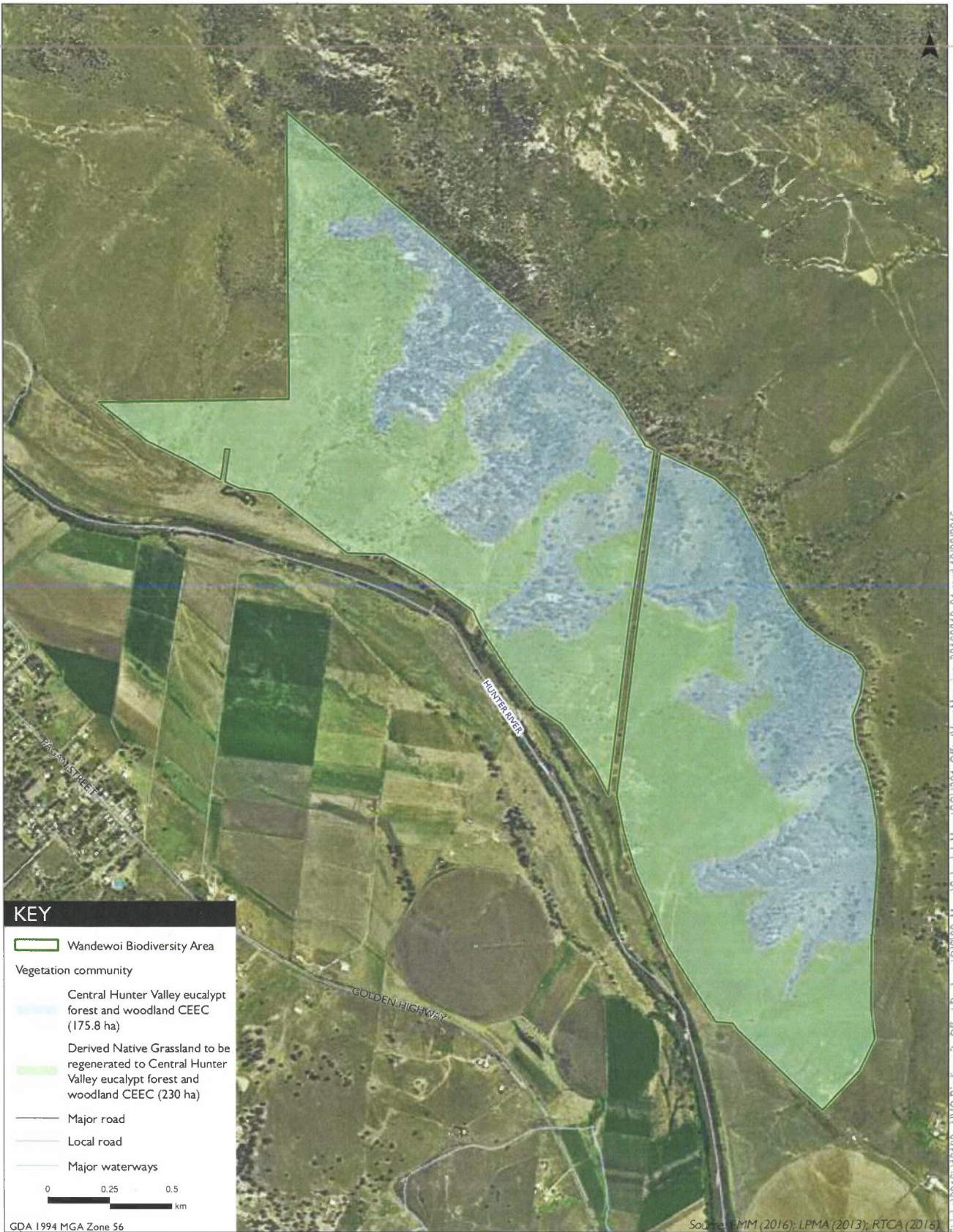
Hunter Valley Operations - State-approved mining
Schedule 2

Figure 4



Potential Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot habitat in the Cheshunt Pit extension area
 Hunter Valley Operations - State-approved mining
 Schedule 2

Figure 5



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