

Background

The Ravensworth Mine Complex and Ashton Mine Complex are neighbouring open cut and underground coal mining complexes, located in the Singleton Local Government Area, in the Hunter Valley region of New South Wales (NSW) (Figure 1).

The Ravensworth Mine Complex includes the Ravensworth Operations Project and the Ravensworth Underground Mine (RUM). The Ravensworth Operations Project includes the Ravensworth North and Ravensworth Narama pits. The RUM is owned and operated by Resource Pacific Pty Limited (RPPL). Glencore Coal Assets Australia Pty Limited oversees the management of RUM. The proposed Action that is the subject of this Referral applies to part of the RUM only.

Approval of the RUM (formally Nardell Underground Coal Mine) was originally granted under NSW *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act) on 20 November 1996 (Development Consent DA 104/96) and was last modified (Modification 9) on 20 June 2013.

The RUM DA 104/96 includes underground longwall mining within the Lemington (B and C), Pikes Gully, Liddell (Upper and Middle) and Barrett coal seams. In October 2014, after the completion of Longwall 9 in the Pikes Gully Seam, operations at RUM were placed into care and maintenance and no further underground mining has occurred since. A total of nine longwalls (Longwalls 1 to 9) were mined out of the State approved 16 longwall panels in the Pikes Gully Seam. The RUM has an approved operational capacity of up to 7 million tonnes per annum of run-of-mine (ROM) coal until 31 July 2024.

The Ashton Mine Complex includes the Ashton Coal Project (including the completed North East Open Cut and the Ashton Underground Mine) and approved but not yet commenced Ashton South East Open Cut (SEOC) Project. The Ashton Coal Project is operated by Ashton Coal Operations Pty Limited (ACOL), a wholly owned subsidiary of Yancoal Australia Limited (Yancoal).

ACOL and RPPL submitted an application on 9 November 2021 to modify DA 104/96 under the NSW EP&A Act to enable ACOL to access and extract approved coal resources at the RUM until approximately December 2032. The coal would be accessed from ACOL's neighbouring Ashton Underground Mine via new non-subsiding first workings developed between the two mining areas. Development of first workings in the Pikes Gully Seam between the two mines would need to commence in August 2022 to enable continuity of ACOL's operations. A description of the proposed modification to DA 104/96 and the integration of the RUM and Ashton Coal Project is provided in the *Ashton-Ravensworth Underground Mine Integration Modification – Ravensworth Underground Mine Modification Report* (ACOL, 2021a).

EPBC Act Approvals Context

The Ravensworth Operations Project was referred under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation 1999* (EPBC) Act on 5 March 2010 and included a project area of approximately 5,590 hectares for its existing and proposed open cut mining operations. The Assistant Secretary of the then Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities approved the Controlled Action on 8 April 2011 (EPBC Approval 2010/5389). EPBC Approval 2010/5389 has been varied on seven occasions, most recently on 10 November 2016. The approved Controlled Action 2010/5389 includes open cut mining activities located within the proposed Action Area (described below).

White Mining Limited referred the Ashton Coal Project under the EPBC Act on 10 December 2001. The Ashton Coal Project comprised three integrated components including a small open cut mine, surface facilities and the Ashton Underground Mine. The Assistant Secretary of the then Environment Australia determined this project to be Not a Controlled Action on 4 January 2002 (Referral Decision 2001/524).

ACOL referred the SEOC Project under the EPBC Act on 17 December 2009, which included the development of open cut operations over an area of approximately 473 hectares. The Assistant Secretary of the then Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts determined this project to be Not a Controlled Action on 26 August 2010 (Referral Decision 2010/5315).

As noted above, the RUM was approved under the EP&A Act on 20 November 1996 and was most recently modified (Modification 9) on 20 June 2013 prior to the EPBC Act Amendment to incorporate the 'Water Trigger' coming into effect. Activities associated with the RUM have not previously been referred under the EPBC Act, operating under the EPBC Act grandfathering provisions.

Activities Included in the Action

The **proposed Action** that is the subject of this Referral includes the following components and activities within the Action Area (shown as the Indicative Underground Mining Area on Figure 2):

- underground mining of the Pikes Gully and Middle Liddell coal seams using longwall mining as shown on Figure 2;
- mining operations until approximately 31 December 2032 (i.e. for a period of approximately 8 years);
- establishment and use of gas, ventilation and water management infrastructure including shafts, bores, pumps and pipelines;
- management of water and gas that accumulates in the underground workings within the Action Area;
- transfer of ROM coal from the RUM Pikes Gully and Middle Liddell coal seams in the Action Area to the neighbouring Ashton Coal Project via connected underground workings; and
- transfer of water and gas from the Action Area to the neighbouring Ashton Coal Project.

Infrastructure developed as part of the Action would be located in previously cleared areas or areas approved for clearing under the Controlled Action for the Ravensworth Operations Project (2010/5389).

Activities Not Included in the Action

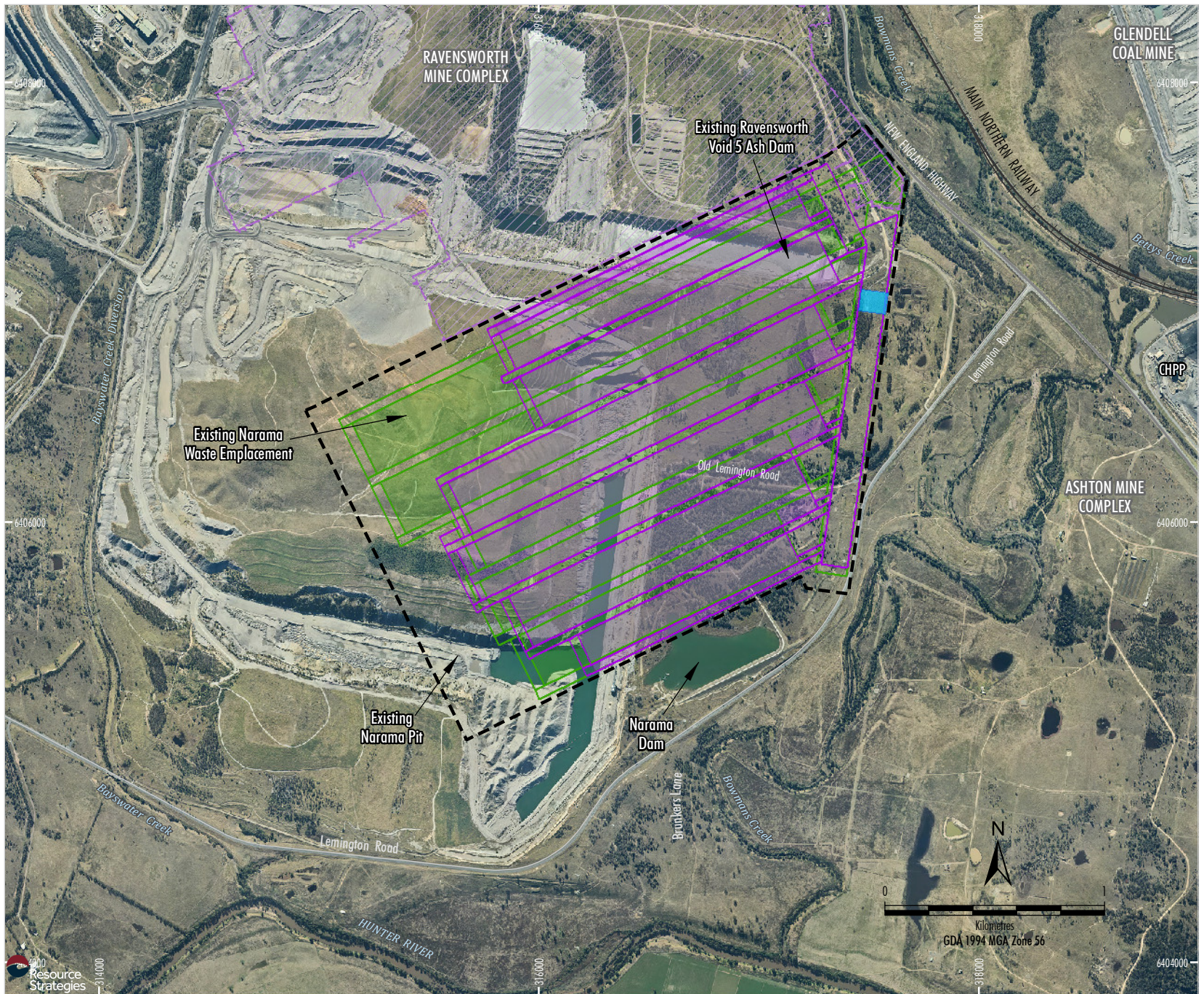
The Action, the subject of this referral, explicitly does not include the following:

- any use of the existing workings of the RUM completed prior to operations being placed into care and maintenance in 2014 (within or outside of the Action Area);
- initial development activities that may support the Action but do not involve ground disturbance or the removal of mature trees or shrubs, including, but is not limited to, survey and demarcation activities, salvage of Aboriginal artefacts, and installation of minor ancillary or supporting infrastructure;
- non-subsiding underground roadways and development which would be used to access the Action Area;
- use of the existing Vent Shaft 5;
- construction and use of Vent Shaft 5 supporting infrastructure;
- maintenance and use of existing infrastructure including access tracks;
- development and use of new access tracks on previously cleared land;
- ongoing exploration activities approved under mining tenements issued under the NSW *Mining Act 1992*, including CL 380, CL 580, CCL 723, ML 1348, ML 1349, ML 1357, ML 1484, ML 1485, ML 1495 and ML 1668;
- existing or proposed activities at the Ashton Coal Project, including the receipt, handling and processing of RUM coal at the Ashton Coal Handling and Processing Plant and receipt of water and gas transferred from the RUM and its management at the Ashton Coal Project;
- any activity associated with the Ravensworth Operations Project including activities that form part of the approved Controlled Action under the EPBC Act for the Ravensworth Operations Project (EPBC Approval 2010/5389); and
- any activity associated with the Ashton Coal Project including activities that form part of the Referral for the Ashton Coal Project ('Not A Controlled Action' Decision EPBC 2001/524).

Potential Subsidence Impacts

The potential impacts of the Action in regards to subsidence have been considered in the *Ravensworth Underground Mine Subsidence Review* prepared by SCT Operations (SCT) (2021). SCT (2021) concluded that impacts to all (natural and built) features are expected to be minor and manageable and the proposed mining is expected to be compliant with the existing Subsidence Performance Measures prescribed in DA 104/96.

SCT (2021) recommended subsidence monitoring, subsidence management processes, risk assessments, geotechnical assessment and subsidence assessments consistent with the statement of commitments and conditions in Development Consent DA 104/96 and identified that these measures continue to be appropriate.



LEGEND

- Completed Pikes Gully Seam Workings
- Existing Shaft 5 Location
- Components of the Action**
- Indicative Underground Mining Area
- Indicative Pikes Gully Seam Longwall Layout
- Indicative Middle Liddell Seam Longwall Layout

Source: SCT (2021); NSW Spatial Services (2022)
 Orthophoto: Ravensworth Mine Complex (2021)



**ASHTON - RAVENSWORTH
 UNDERGROUND MINE INTEGRATION PROJECT**
 General Arrangement

Figure 2