



Statement of Reasons for reconsideration decision of the Saraji East Mining Lease Project (EPBC 2016/7791) under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*

I, Mark Say, Director of Renewables Regulatory Practice Section, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, in my capacity as former acting delegate for the Minister for the Environment and Water, provide the following statement of reasons for my decision of 18 July 2025, under section 78C of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (**EPBC Act**), to reconsider and confirm the decision made by James Barker of 18 November 2016 under section 75 of the EPBC Act for the Saraji East Mining Lease Project (EPBC 2016/7791) that the proposed action by BM Alliance Coal Operations Pty Ltd (**the proponent**) to develop and operate an underground coal mine, north of Dysart and 167 kilometres (km) south-west of Mackay, in the Bowen Basin, Queensland (**the proposed action**), is a controlled action under the EPBC Act and that sections 18, 18A, 24D and 24E are the controlling provisions.

Legislation

- 1) Relevant legislation is set out in [Annexure A](#).

Background

- 2) On 18 October 2016, the department received a valid referral from BM Alliance Coal Operations Pty Limited (**the proponent**) to develop and operate an underground coal mine, north of Dysart and 167 kilometres (km) south-west of Mackay, in the Bowen Basin, Queensland (**the proposed action**).
- 3) On 18 November 2016, a delegate of the then Minister for the Environment (**the delegate**) determined under section 75 of the EPBC Act that the proposed action was a controlled action and sections 18, 18A, 24D and 24E are the controlling provisions (**the original referral decision**).
- 4) On 8 July 2022, EJA submitted a reconsideration request on the basis of the availability of substantial new information (section 78(1)(a) of the EPBC Act) (**the reconsideration request**). On the same day, EJA also submitted reconsideration requests for 18 other coal and gas projects that had been determined to be controlled actions.
- 5) On 11 August 2022, EJA sent a supplementary letter referring to further substantial new information, which it stated was relevant to this request and to the other 18 requests, that had been published since 8 July 2022.
- 6) On 3 November 2022, a delegate of the then minister determined, based on the information then available, that the reconsideration request met the requirements of the EPBC Act and the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Regulations 2000* (EPBC Regulations) and was therefore a valid request.

- 7) On 3 November 2022, the reconsideration request was published on the department’s public internet portal and public comments on whether a matter referred to in any of paragraphs 78(1)(a) to (ca) was applicable in relation to the action were invited for 15 business days, from 3 November to 24 November 2022.
- 8) On 3 November 2022, in accordance with sections 78B(4) and 78B(5) of the EPBC Act, relevant state and Commonwealth ministers were also informed of the reconsideration request and invited to comment.
- 9) On 3 November 2022, in accordance with section 78B(2) of the EPBC Act, the proponent was also invited to comment on the reconsideration request.
- 10) On 10 November 2022, the department sent the proponent a request for further information (**RFI**) on the greenhouse gas (**GHG**) emissions associated with the proposed action, emissions management and consumers of end-product extracted as part of the proposed action.
- 11) On 29 August 2023, EJA noted with respect to two of its other reconsideration requests that it had provided pre-final-publication versions of the (1) *Working Group II to the IPCC’s Sixth Assessment Report, Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability (IPCC WGII Report)*; and (2) *Working Group III contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change (IPCC WGIII Report)* as part of the reconsideration request, and that final consolidated versions of those reports had since been released.
- 12) On 29 April 2024, EJA sent a letter to the then minister with enclosed material to further support the position set out in the reconsideration requests of the remaining 11 coal and gas projects.
- 13) On 18 July 2025, under section 78C of the EPBC Act, I reconsidered and confirmed the referral decision that the proposed action is a controlled action and that the controlling provisions for assessment are:
 - a) sections 18 and 18A (listed threatened species and communities), and
 - b) sections 24D and 24E (a water resource, in relation to coal seam gas development).

Evidence or other material on which my findings were based

- 14) My reconsideration decision was based on a brief prepared by the department, which contained the following attachments:

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| A. | Original referral decision material A1: Signed referral brief dated 18 November 2016 A2: Signed referral decision notice dated 18 November 2016 A3: Original referral decision briefing package dated 18 November 2016 |
| B. | Request for reconsideration B1: Letter from EJA dated 8 July 2022 |

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| | <p>B2: Annexure 1</p> <p>B3: Sources of Information for Annexure 1</p> <p>B4: Annexure 2 – Analysis of research on climate change and its impacts on Matters of National Environmental Significance under the EPBC Act</p> <p>B5: Annexure 2.1 – Spreadsheets of data</p> <p>B6: Annexure 2.2 – Sources of data for Annexure 2.1</p> <p>B7: Annexure 2.3 – Fire Impact Maps</p> <p>B8: Letter from EJA providing further material dated 11 August 2022</p> <p>B9: State of the Environment Report 2021</p> <p>B10: Pre-final-publication versions of the IPCC WGII and WGIII Reports</p> <p>B11: Final consolidated versions of the IPCC WGII and WGIII Reports</p> <p>B12: Letter from EJA regarding IPCC WGII and WGIII Reports dated 29 August 2023</p> <p>B13: Letter from EJA regarding Annexure III of the WGII Report (Annex III: Scenarios and Modelling Methods) dated 4 October 2023</p> <p>B14: Annexure III of the WGII Report (Annex III: Scenarios and Modelling Methods) provided by EJA via email on 6 October 2023</p> <p>B15: Letter from EJA providing further material dated 29 April 2024</p> <p>B16: IEA Net Zero Roadmap, 2023 update</p> <p>B17: IEA World Energy Outlook, 2023</p> <p>B18: Expert report by Ms. Rachel Wilson, 26 April 2024</p> |
| C. | Reconsideration decision notice – For my signature if I agreed with the recommendation in the brief |
| D. | <p>Letters – For my signature if I agreed with the recommendation in the brief</p> <p>D1: Letter to the designated proponent</p> <p>D2: Letter to requestor</p> <p>D3: Letter to State Minister</p> <p>D4: Letter to Minister for Indigenous Australians, Senator the Hon Malarndirri McCarthy</p> <p>D5: Letter to Minister for Climate Change and Energy, the Hon Chris Bowen MP</p> <p>D6: Letter to Minister for Resources and Minister for Northern Australia, the Hon Madeleine King MP</p> <p>D7: Letter to Minister for Industry and Science, the Hon Ed Husic MP</p> |

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| | D8: Letter to Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Hon Julie Collins MP |
| E. | Signed validity brief dated 3 November 2022 |
| F. | Commonwealth Ministers' responses to invitation to comment: F1: Minister for Indigenous Australians, the Hon Linda Burney MP F2: Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Senator the Hon Murray Watt F3: Minister for Climate Change and Energy, the Hon Chris Bowen MP F4: Minister for Industry and Science, the Hon Ed Husic MP F5: Minister for Resources and Minister for Northern Australia, the Hon Madeleine King MP |
| G. | State Minister response to invitation to comment |
| H. | Proponent response to invitation to comment |
| I. | Request for further information (RFI) on proposed action's emissions |
| J. | Proponent final response to RFI J1: Reconsideration response to RFI J2: Reconsideration Decision – Decarbonisation Plan J3: Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Plan J4: Follow-up to RFI 15012025 J5: Response to follow up to RFI 20012025 |
| K. | Public Comments K1: Public Portal Comments K2: Attachments to Public Portal Comments K3: Ministerial Submissions direct to the Minister K4: Requestor Submission dated 24 November 2022, including attached World Energy Outlook 2022 (Free Data Set) K5: Additional Public Portal Comments |
| L. | IEA Coal Report 2023 (IEA's annual coal market report for 2023) |
| M. | Synthesis Report of the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) |

Reconsideration request

- 15) In the reconsideration request, EJA stated that its request was made on the basis of substantial new information about the impacts the proposed action will have or is likely to have on matters of national environmental significance (**MNES**), including a number of MNES not listed in the original referral decision. EJA stated that the information provided with the reconsideration request demonstrated that the proposed action will or is likely to have significant physical effects on a number of MNES because of the GHG emissions associated with the proposed action. EJA requested that the Minister revoke the original referral decision and substitute a new decision under section 75(1) of the EPBC Act, listing all MNES that it had identified as affected by climate change as controlling provisions.
- 16) EJA estimated the GHG emissions associated with the extraction and combustion of the coal from the proposed action. It contended that, if the proposed action goes ahead, there is a real (as opposed to remote) chance that these GHG emissions will result in physical effects of climate change (fire, ocean heatwaves and acidification, drought, rainfall extremes and flooding) and the proposed action will have, or is likely to have, a significant impact on a number of MNES.
- 17) EJA analysed documents that referred to climate change and its effects on MNES with reference to certain reports on climate change by authoritative national and international organisations. EJA outlined its methodology and collated its findings in Annexure 2 of its reconsideration request. I noted that some of the key findings are:
 - a) The *Working Group I contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis*, establishes unequivocally that human actions have caused a global temperature increase.
 - b) The frequency, severity and duration of extreme fire weather conditions have increased in southern and eastern Australia. Extreme fire weather in 2019/2020 was at least 30% more likely than a century ago due to climate change (*Working Group II to the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report, Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability (IPCC WGII Report)*).
 - c) Rising sea surface temperatures have exacerbated marine heatwaves, notably near Western Australia in 2011, the Great Barrier Reef in 2016, 2017 and 2020, and the Tasman Sea in 2015/2016, 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 (IPCC WGII Report).
 - d) The oceans around Australia are acidifying — the average pH of surface waters has decreased since the 1880s by about 0.1, representing an over 30% increase in acidity. These changes have led to a reduction in coral calcification and growth rates on the Great Barrier Reef (IPCC WGII Report; Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation and Bureau of Meteorology, *State of the Climate 2020*).
 - e) Climate change will result in more drought in southern and eastern Australia (IPCC WGII Report).
 - f) Extreme rainfall intensity in northern Australia has been increasing (IPCC WGII Report).

- g) Governments plan to produce more than twice the amount of fossil fuels in 2030 than would be consistent with limiting warming to 1.5°C (*United Nations Environment Programme, The Production Gap: 2021 Report*).
 - h) All global modelled pathways that limit warming to 1.5°C with no or limited overshoot, and those that limit warming to 2°C, involve rapid and deep and in most cases immediate GHG emission reductions in all sectors (*IPCC WGIII Report, Summary for Policy Makers*).
 - i) As part of further climate change, more extreme fire weather in southern and eastern Australia can be expected (*high confidence*) (IPCC WGII Report).
 - j) In southern Australia, some forest ecosystems (alpine ash, snowgum woodland, pencil pine and northern jarrah) are projected to transition to a new state or collapse due to hotter and drier conditions with more fires (IPCC WGII Report).
 - k) Future ocean warming, coupled with periodic extreme heat events, is projected to lead to the continued loss of ecosystem services and ecological functions (*high confidence*) (IPCC WGII Report).
- 18) The reconsideration request stated that, in order to demonstrate the likely significant impacts of climate change on MNES, EJA reviewed and analysed authoritative sources of information relevant to the protection of MNES. The material included conservation advices, listing advices, management plans, information from the department's Species Profile and Threats database (**SPRAT**), Ecological Character Descriptions for Ramsar Wetlands, World Heritage State Party Reports, International Union for the Conservation of Nature (**IUCN**) Conservation Outlook Assessments for World Heritage properties, management plans for National Heritage places, Commonwealth marine environment report cards and bioregional plans – referred to by EJA as **source material**.
- 19) EJA subjected this source material to a code-driven, text-mining process that identified statements that appear to acknowledge the impacts of climate change. The code was prepared by Dr Isaac Peterson. A subsequent search was performed to identify statements on the impacts of fire, which EJA stated was a specific focus because of the directness of its impacts on MNES and because of its particular significance for the Australian environment. The outcome of the text-mining process was reviewed by EJA reviewers to confirm each search result was relevant, in the sense of conveying the idea that a value, property or other aspects of an MNES is, will be, or will potentially be vulnerable to or impacted by climate change or the physical effects of climate change. The review process was also used to enable EJA to identify any gaps, incoherence or formatting errors in the results produced by the code.
- 20) EJA's findings from its text-mining process were that climate change is likely to impact the following MNES:
- a) the world heritage values of declared World Heritage properties
 - b) the National Heritage values of National Heritage places
 - c) the ecological character of declared Ramsar wetlands

- d) listed threatened species in the critically endangered category
 - e) listed threatened species in the endangered category
 - f) listed threatened species in the vulnerable category
 - g) listed threatened ecological communities in the critically endangered category
 - h) listed threatened ecological communities in the endangered category
 - i) listed threatened species (other than a species included in the extinct category or a conservation dependent species) and listed threatened ecological communities (other than an ecological community in the vulnerable category)
 - j) listed migratory species
 - k) the environment in a Commonwealth marine area (containing listed marine species)
 - l) the environment in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.
- 21) EJA's findings included that climate change decreases habitat availability by increasing fragmentation, changes species distribution, facilitates the spread of invasive species, increases erosion rates, and decreases water quality. EJA's conclusions about the impact of climate change on matters of national environmental significance from this process are discussed further under the Protected Matters heading below.
- 22) EJA sought from Professor Lesley Hughes, a Distinguished Professor of Biology and Interim Executive Dean at Faculty of Science and Engineering at Macquarie University, an independent expert opinion on the analysis and conclusions in the reconsideration request. Professor Hughes' opinion is that the material used by EJA and EJA's analysis of that material supports the following propositions:
- a) There is a real (as opposed to a remote) chance that a consequence of continued emission of GHG emissions into the atmosphere — including through the combustion of coal and/or gas — will be an increase in the regularity, scope and intensity of climate hazards (such as fire, heat extremes, marine heatwaves and ocean acidification, heavy precipitation and flooding, and drought).
 - b) There is a real (as opposed to a remote) chance that those events (or one or more of them) will adversely affect the following MNES:
 - c) the world heritage values of declared World Heritage properties
 - i. the National Heritage values of National Heritage places
 - ii. the ecological character of declared Ramsar wetlands
 - iii. listed threatened species in the critically endangered category
 - iv. listed threatened species in the endangered category
 - v. listed threatened species in the vulnerable category

- vi. listed threatened ecological communities in the critically endangered category
 - vii. listed threatened ecological communities in the endangered category
 - viii. listed threatened species (other than a species included in the extinct category or a conservation dependent species) and listed threatened ecological communities (other than an ecological community in the vulnerable category)
 - ix. listed migratory species
 - x. the environment in a Commonwealth marine area (containing listed marine species)
 - xi. the environment in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.
- 23) EJA also sought from Professor David Karoly, an honorary Professor in the School of Geography, Earth and Atmospheric Sciences at the University of Melbourne, an expert report on the analysis and conclusions on the climate system and the physical impacts of climate change in the reconsideration request. Professor Karoly's opinion is that the material used by EJA and EJA's analysis of that material supports the following propositions:
- a) There is an approximately linear relationship between anthropogenic carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions and global temperature, such that every tonne of CO₂ emissions adds to global warming. Reaching net zero anthropogenic CO₂ emissions is a requirement to stabilise human-induced global temperature at any level.
 - a) Limiting human-induced global warming requires deep reductions in CO₂ and other GHG emissions (compared to historical and present rates) in the coming decades. The modelled pathways for limiting global warming necessitate drastic cuts to the use of fossil fuels and require a substantial amount of fossil fuels to remain unburned.
 - b) Human-induced climate change will cause unavoidable increases in multiple climate hazards in Australia, including fire, heat extremes, marine heatwaves and acidification, heavy precipitation and flooding and drought. These physical effects become larger in direct relation to increased global warming.
 - c) There is a real (as opposed to a remote) chance that a consequence of continued emission of GHG emissions into the atmosphere — including through the combustion of coal and/or gas — will be an increase in the regularity, scope and intensity of climate hazards (such as fire, heat extremes, marine heatwaves and ocean acidification, heavy precipitation and flooding, and drought).
 - d) There is a real (as opposed to a remote) chance that those events (or one or more of them) will adversely affect the following MNES:
 - i. the world heritage values of declared World Heritage properties
 - ii. the National Heritage values of National Heritage places
 - iii. the ecological character of declared Ramsar wetlands

- iv. listed threatened species in the critically endangered category
- v. listed threatened species in the endangered category
- vi. listed threatened species in the vulnerable category
- vii. listed threatened ecological communities in the critically endangered category
- viii. listed threatened ecological communities in the endangered category
- ix. listed threatened species (other than a species included in the extinct category or a conservation dependent species) and listed threatened ecological communities (other than an ecological community in the vulnerable category)
- x. listed migratory species
- xi. the environment in a Commonwealth marine area (containing listed marine species)
- xii. the environment in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

24) Professor Karoly also considered that additional material is likely to strengthen the analysis in Annexure 2 of the reconsideration request. Professor Karoly stated that:

- a) One of the key risks provided in IPCC Sixth Assessment Report Working Group II Fact Sheet – Australasia: Climate Change Impacts and Risk is the “Inability of institutions and governance systems to manage climate risks (high confidence)”, which is of particular relevance to this case.
- b) There is an additional climate hazard - sea level rise and extreme sea level and storm surge events - that is increasing in frequency and intensity due to climate change along all Australian coasts. Coastal inundation associated with this climate hazard is likely to have major impacts on coastal ecosystems and coastal wetlands.
- c) The State of the Environment 2021 Report (**SOE Report**) (which had not been published at the time Professor Karoly provided his report) was likely to supplement the material in Annexure 1 and Annexure 2, but was unlikely to change any of the propositions.

25) EJA’s supplementary letter dated 11 August 2022 referred to the SOE Report as additional information to support its request of 8 July 2022. In that supplementary letter, EJA highlighted the following from the SOE Report as key findings relevant to the reconsideration requests:

- a) Warming of the Australian climate, and associated changes in the climate system, are driven by increased concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Changes to the climate are inevitable, based on greenhouse gases that have already been emitted, but further changes in the second half of the 21st century will depend on the level of future global emissions.
- b) The intensity and frequency of extreme weather-related events – including heatwaves, droughts, bushfires and floods – are changing. Ongoing increases in land and sea

temperatures across Australia driven by climate change have coincided with multiple extreme weather events, devastating impacts on many of Australia's unique natural ecosystems and caused the death of many individuals of many species.

- c) Pressures on Australian biodiversity have not improved since the 2016 State of the Environment Report and outcomes for species and ecosystems are generally poor. Multiple pressures are interacting to amplify threats to biodiversity, and abrupt changes in ecological systems that are occurring. In particular, climate change and associated extreme events, compounded by other pressures, have had a major impact on biodiversity over the past 5 years, with consequences likely to be evident for many years to come. Many species and ecosystems will require their status to be assessed or reassessed in the coming years, and urgent recovery actions will be needed to avert extinction.
 - d) Climate change (affecting water temperature, salinity, acidification, circulation and ocean nutrients) remains one of the pressures with the highest impact on the Australian marine environment. Substantial and widespread degradation of Australia's marine environmental values is expected if the pressures identified in the SOE Report are not addressed.
- 26) I noted that the department has also considered the SOE Report and identified additional relevant themes:
- a) Climate change is seen as one of the most significant threats to the Outstanding Universal Value of World Heritage properties globally. Identified climate change-related impacts to Australian World Heritage properties in the last 5 years include: bushfires which cause loss of vegetation and other landscape impacts, mass coral bleaching events, significant seagrass dieback and marine ecosystem changes, increased drying, vegetation community decline, increased habitat reduction, changes to saltwater and freshwater wetlands, increased wetness and more waterway sedimentation due to intense wet events after drought.
 - b) A 2016 national review of National Heritage places (Wildlife Heritage & Marine Division 2017) found that 67% of National Heritage places experienced climate change pressures.
 - c) The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Outlook Report (2019) identified the main threat to the Great Barrier Reef as climate change. Marine heatwaves have been associated with coral bleaching on the Great Barrier Reef in successive years, resulting in impaired recruitment and recovery of reefs. Before 2016, only 2 mass coral bleaching events had occurred in the Great Barrier Reef. Following the bleaching event of 2016, there were further mass bleaching events in 2017 and 2020. Projections reported by the IPCC indicate that coral reefs are expected to decline globally by a further 70-90% (relative to 2015) at 1.5°C global warming, and by more than 99% at 2°C global warming.
 - d) Threats to migratory seabirds include the redistribution of their prey in response to climate change and the southwards movement of some species due to climate change.
 - e) Ramsar wetlands are vulnerable to further hydrological changes and drying under future climate change scenarios. Drought conditions, in conjunction with increased consumptive water use, result in a decrease in flows into wetlands and reduction in inundation. The 2019

Aerial Survey of Wetland Birds in Eastern Australia (Porter et al. 2019) found that the wetland area index was the lowest since surveys began in 1983.

- 27) In addition to the material in EJA's request, in making my decision I also considered the *Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) Synthesis Report: Climate Change 2023* released by the IPCC on 20 March 2023. This report synthesises the findings from the IPCC's earlier reports on climate science, impacts and adaptation, and mitigation of climate change, including in relation to the contribution of GHG emissions from fossil fuel infrastructure.
- 28) I took into account both the pre-final-publication versions of the IPCC WGII and WGIII Reports and the final consolidated versions of those reports in making my decision, and noted that the department had done the same in preparing my brief.
- 29) In EJA's further supplementary letter dated 29 April 2024, EJA provided further material in support of its reconsideration request. The enclosed material included:
- a) the *2023 IEA's Net Zero Roadmap: A Global Pathway to keep the 1.5°C Goal in Reach*. This report includes data and analysis that maps out a pathway for the global energy sector to achieve net zero CO₂ emissions by 2050 and play its part in achieving the 1.5°C goal;
 - b) the *IEA's World Energy Outlook 2023*. The report revises its 2022 projections in its stated policies scenario on the direction of the energy economy, based on the actual state in different sectors, countries and regions; and
 - c) an Expert report by Ms Rachel Wilson, dated 26 April 2024. This report provides an opinion from an economist with expertise in the electricity and fossil fuels markets and modelling, that supports the substitution submission made in the reconsideration requests. I noted that Ms Wilson's opinions include that "one cannot know with a level of certainty or confidence that any particular forecast will be correct to 2050, as to either coal or gas markets, and that similarly it is "unknowable" what will be the effect or removal of a particular supply or coal or gas from the coal or gas markets".
- 30) EJA noted in its letter that it had already provided 2022 versions of the IEA reports in Annexure 1 of the reconsideration request. I considered both the newer and older versions of the IEA reports in making my decision, in addition to the Expert report by Ms Rachel Wilson

Submissions and consultation

- 31) Under section 78B of the EPBC Act, public comment on the reconsideration request was invited for 15 business days from 3 November to 24 November 2022 and comments were also sought from the proponent and relevant state and Commonwealth ministers, as described above.
- 32) I took into account the public comments, proponent comments and comments from relevant State and Commonwealth Minister which are summarised below

Commonwealth ministers

- 33) On 3 November 2022, in accordance with section 78B(4) of the EPBC Act, the following then Commonwealth ministers were informed of the reconsideration request and invited to give

the department, within 15 business days, information about whether a matter referred to in any of paragraphs 78(1)(a) to (ca) of the EPBC Act was applicable in relation to the proposed action:

- a) Minister for Indigenous Australians, the Hon Linda Burney MP
 - b) Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Senator the Hon Murray Watt
 - c) Minister for Climate Change and Energy, the Hon Chris Bowen MP
 - d) Minister for Industry and Science, the Hon Ed Husic MP
 - e) Minister for Resources and Minister for Northern Australia, the Hon Madeleine King MP
- 34) On 24 November 2022, a representative of the National Indigenous Australians Agency responded on behalf of the Minister for Indigenous Australians and noted they had no comment on the reconsideration request.
- 35) On 24 November 2022, a representative of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry responded on behalf of the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and noted that they had no comment on the reconsideration request.
- 36) On 28 November 2022, a representative of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water responded on behalf of the Minister for Climate Change and Energy and noted they had no comment on the reconsideration request.
- 37) On 9 December 2022, the Minister for Industry and Science responded that he had no comment on the reconsideration request.
- 38) On 13 December 2022, a representative of the Department of Industry, Science and Resources (DISR) responded on behalf of the Minister for Resources and Minister for Northern Australia and noted (also referring to the other projects subject to EJA's reconsideration request of 8 July 2022):

DISR supports the sustainable development of all resource projects where they are conducted in compliance with relevant environmental protection legislation. The support of DISR for the original assessment of projects was subject to the proponent obtaining the relevant environmental approvals, required by State and Commonwealth agencies. New information provided in the reconsideration requests does not alter the original conditional support of DISR toward the reconsidered projects.

State Minister

- 39) On 3 November 2022, in accordance with section 78B(5) of the EPBC Act, Mr Chris Loveday, as delegate for the Hon Meaghan Scanlon MP, then Queensland Minister for Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, was informed of the reconsideration request and invited to give, within 15 business days, comment on whether a matter referred to in any of paragraphs 78(1)(a) to (ca) of the EPBC Act was applicable in relation to the proposed action, and any other information they considered relevant to the reconsideration.

40) On 28 November 2022, Mr Loveday responded, noting that he considered that as the referral decision is made by the Commonwealth Environment Minister under the EPBC Act, the reconsideration decision is the minister’s alone, and he had no further comments to provide

Public Comments – department’s public portal

41) As required under section 78B(6) of the EPBC Act, the reconsideration request was published on the department’s public internet portal on 3 November 2022. Public comments on whether a matter referred to in any of paragraphs 78(1)(a) to (ca) was applicable in relation to the action were invited for 15 business days, from 3 to 24 November 2022.

42) The department received 879 comments through its public portal.

43) On the public portal, members of the public were invited to answer the five prompts set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Public comment questions and response options

| Question Number | Question | Response options |
|-----------------|---|-----------------------|
| 1 | Do you consider there is substantial new information available about the impacts the action has, will have or is likely to have on a matter protected under Part 3* of the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> (Cth) (EPBC Act)? | Yes / No or Blank |
| 2 | Provide reasons for your answer and / or any comments below. | Text Comment or Blank |
| 3 | Do you consider there has been a substantial change in circumstance that was not foreseen at the time of the first referral decision and that relates to the impacts the action has, or will have or is likely to have on a matter protected under Part 3* of the EPBC Act? | Yes / No or Blank |
| 4 | Provide reasons for your answer and / or any comments below. | Text Comment or Blank |
| 5 | If applicable, provide any other comments on whether you consider there are reasons to revoke the first referral decision and substitute a new decision. This may include any other comments on whether a matter referred to in any of paragraphs 78(1)(a) to (ca) of the EPBC Act applies in relation to the action. *(The current version of the EPBC Act can be accessed through the department’s website). | Text Comment or Blank |

Question 1: Do you consider there is substantial new information available about the impacts the action has, will have or is likely to have on a matter protected under Part 3 of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth) (EPBC Act)?

44) The department received the following responses in relation to Question 1:

- Yes – 832 responses
- No – 4 responses
- Blank – 43 responses

Question 2: Provide reasons for your answer and / or any comments below.

45) The department received the following responses in relation to Question 2:

- Comment – 830 responses
- Blank – 49 responses

46) I note that the public comments raised similar issues to public comments the department received in relation to other reconsiderations requests made by EJA. Respondents who answered ‘Yes’ in response to Question 1 made comments summarised as follows:

- a) the reconsideration request includes information that is new and substantial because it did not exist when the first decision was made or was not before the decision maker when the first decision was made;
- b) information about the climate change fuelled 2019-20 bushfires and the impacts on species, communities and other protected areas was not available when the first decision was made;
- c) the reconsideration request includes recent, factual and scientific information about climate change from documents such as IPCC reports and the 2021 State of the Environment Report;
- d) the project will increase greenhouse gas emissions which will accelerate climate change and extreme weather events such as floods and droughts.

47) I note that respondents who answered ‘No’ in response to Question 1 indicated that there was substantial new information to be considered. I considered the selection of ‘No’ in response to Question 1 was an error. Only 1 ‘No’ respondent added a comment which is summarised below:

- a) The proposed action will have a significant impact on animals, plants, ecosystems and places.

Question 3: Do you consider there has been a substantial change in circumstance that was not foreseen at the time of the first referral decision and that relates to the impacts the action has, or will have or is likely to have on a matter protected under Part 3 of the EPBC Act?

48) The department received the following responses in relation to Question 3:

- Yes – 130 responses
- No – 614 responses
- Blank – 135 responses

Question 4: Provide reasons for your answer and / or any comments below

49) The department received the following responses in relation to Question 4:

- Comment – 562 responses
- Blank – 317 responses

50) I note that the public comments raised similar issues to public comments the department received in relation to other reconsiderations requests made by EJA. Respondents who answered 'Yes' to Question 3 made comments summarised as follows:

- a) the condition of the environment is further worsening and being degraded because of climate change;
- b) there is a need to consider cumulative impacts of coal and gas projects and greenhouse gas emissions;
- c) there is a new government with different policies and commitments in relation to climate change;
- d) there has been an increase in extreme weather events impacting communities and the environment;
- e) the *Final Report of the Independent Review of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999 (Samuel Review)* highlighted the substantial decrease in effectiveness of the EPBC Act regarding climate change;
- f) there has been a significant increase in scientific knowledge and public understanding regarding consequences of environmental harm; and
- g) the rapid and accelerating change in climate has led to climate emergency and environmental tipping points.

51) Respondents who answered 'No' for Question 3 made comments summarised as follows:

- a) not applicable (NA);
- b) the reconsideration requester is not relying on this argument for their legal intervention;
- c) the reconsideration request provided substantial new information;
- d) climate science has been known for a long time and has been ignored;

- e) the environmental impacts from climate change were foreseeable;
- f) the circumstances are much the same as they were when the project was first assessed;
and
- g) There has not been a change in circumstances, however, there has been a change in acknowledgement of the circumstances documented by scientists and experienced by the population.

Question 5: If applicable, provide any other comments on whether you consider there are reasons to revoke the first referral decision and substitute a new decision. This may include any other comments on whether a matter referred to in any of paragraphs 78(1)(a) to (ca) of the EPBC Act applies in relation to the action.

52) The department received the following responses in relation to Question 5:

- Comment – 707 responses
- Blank – 172 responses

53) The majority of the responses made comments similar to those in Questions 2 and 4, and raised similar issues to public comments received in relation to other reconsideration requests made by EJA, and also raised the following issues:

- a) global warming must be limited to 1.5°C;
- b) climate change will impact future generations;
- c) climate change is having impacts on people's physical and mental health;
- d) climate change has economic and social impacts, including impacts to food security;
- e) concern about climate change impacts on the Great Barrier Reef, Ningaloo Reef and other protected areas, biodiversity and plant and animal species;
- f) there should be no new gas or coal projects;
- g) the Samuel Review outlines that cumulative impacts and future challenges like climate change are not effectively considered under the EPBC Act;
- h) the need to take responsibility for the emissions of our exported fossil fuels that are burned overseas and contribute to global climate change;
- i) global contributions to climate change impacts other countries, such as our Pacific neighbours;
- j) concerns about impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait land and heritage;
- k) humanity must be considered before economic profits;
- l) there is a lack of support and funding for Australian environmental research;

- m) the capacity for the Australian environment and its people to recover from climate change effects is diminishing;
- n) support for renewable energy and decarbonising our economy, no more 'business as usual';
- o) 'every emission counts' – feelings of shame / guilt / stress about Australia's role in accelerating climate change;
- p) scope 3 emissions need to be included in assessment and reporting; and
- q) approving this project is incompatible with goals to achieve net-zero emissions.

Other public comments received

54) Three additional public submissions relating to EJA's 18 reconsideration requests (prior to the public comment period, EJA advised that it suspended its reconsideration request for a project that was subject to a proposed refusal decision) were submitted through the online portal for another project (EPBC 2022/09393) which was open for comment on a referral. The submissions were made during the public comment period for EJA's 18 reconsideration requests.

Public comments – made directly to the then minister

- 55) In addition to the above public comments, members of the public also wrote directly to the then minister regarding the proposed action, or generally concerning EJA's 19 reconsideration requests. These comments were provided outside of the department's formal public comment process. The then minister received 41 direct submissions concerning the proposed action. Of these submissions, three did not agree with the premise of the reconsideration request, noting, in summary:
- a) The EPBC Act is not the appropriate legislative instrument to regulate carbon emissions.
 - b) There is no proof that fossil fuels are linked to climate change.
- 56) The remaining 38 direct submissions either supported the reconsideration request and / or considered the proposed action should not proceed. The submissions made comments similar to those discussed in paragraphs 46, 50 and 53.
- 57) EJA (on behalf of the ECCQ) also made a submission to the then minister on 24 November 2022 on their 19 reconsideration requests. The submission referred to the *IEA World Energy Outlook 2022* which provides an update to the IEA's *Net Zero by 2050 – A Roadmap for the Global Energy Sector Emissions by 2050 (NZE 21)*. In particular, EJA noted that the update to the NZE 21 confirms previous scenarios presented by the IEA and IPCC, being that deep reductions are required in coal and gas markets to meet temperatures below 1.5°C, and those markets do not require the approval of long lead-time gas projects or any new coal mines or coal mine extensions. It also noted that the update to the NZE 21 confirms that:
- a) If the proposed action (or any of the other Proposed Projects, being the proposed action and the other projects also subject to EJA's reconsideration request of 8 July 2022) is assumed to be approved and exist, then, at minimum, emissions resulting from the extraction of coal and gas from the proposed action would result in reaching a minimum

temperature which is above 1.5°C. Less harmful scenarios cannot occur in a future with any of the Proposed Projects.

- b) In order to achieve the updated NZE 21 scenario, total energy supply of coal has already peaked, and total energy supply of natural gas will peak by 2030. In light of this, the demand for the coal or gas that would be extracted pursuant to each of the Proposed Projects (being the proposed action and the other projects also subject to EJA's reconsideration request of 8 July 2022) is not fixed and it cannot be said that the impacts will necessarily be the same in a future without the Proposed Project as they would be in a future with it.
- c) There are many scenarios (and other technically feasible scenarios which have been validated by the IPCC AR6 Working Group III) which cannot be achieved with input assumptions equivalent to the projected future supply of coal or gas entailed by the 19 Proposed Projects.

58) In making my decision, I took into account the public submissions that were made directly to the Minister as well as those received through the public portal

Proponent's submission on the reconsideration request

- 59) On 3 November 2022, in accordance with section 78B(2) of the EPBC Act, the proponent was invited to comment on the reconsideration request.
- 60) On 24 November 2022, the proponent provided a letter in response to the invitation to comment.
- 61) The proponent's letter states that the EPBC Act is not the appropriate mechanism to regulate the management of greenhouse gas emissions, stating that there are a range of other legislative and policy mechanisms in place that apply to the management of greenhouse gas emissions.
- 62) The letter further states that:
 - a) the quantity of estimated greenhouse gas emissions of the proposed action is such that it cannot be said that the contribution of the proposed action would be likely to have a 'significant' impact on matters of national environmental significance;
 - b) the information provided to the minister in the reconsideration request is not specific to the proposed action, and does not establish causal link between greenhouse gas emissions from the proposed action and impacts on matters of national environmental significance; and
 - c) the precautionary principle is not triggered as it does not satisfy the threshold conditions applicable to the precautionary principle, and in any event, BMA has adopted a precautionary approach to the management of greenhouse gas emissions, including through steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions for the proposed action.
- 63) The letter concludes that the minister:

- a) should not revoke the original controlled action decision made under section 75 of the EPBC Act for the proposed action and substitute a new decision, as advocated by the reconsideration request
- b) should confirm the original controlled action decision made in relation to the proposed action

Request for further information on greenhouse gas emissions from the proponent

- 64) On 10 November 2022, the department sent the proponent a **RFI** on the greenhouse gas emissions associated with the proposed action. The RFI requested information on:
- a) scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions associated with the proposed action;
 - a) emissions management; and
 - b) consumers of end-product extracted as part of the proposed action.
- 65) The RFI sought that greenhouse gas emissions estimates should be aggregated in million tonnes carbon dioxide equivalent (**Mt CO₂-e**) and defined greenhouse gas by reference to section 7A of the *National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Act 2007* (Cth) (**NGER Act**). It also defined scope 1, 2 and 3 greenhouse gas emissions by reference to the department's National Greenhouse Accounts Factors workbook, which categorises emissions as follows:
- a) Scope 1 – direct emissions which are produced from sources within the boundary of an organisation and as a result of that organisation's activities (e.g. fugitive emissions from a coal extraction at a mine).
 - a) Scope 2 – indirect emissions which occur outside of the boundary of an organisation from the generation of electricity that is consumed by the organisation.
 - b) Scope 3 – indirect emissions, other than electricity, which occur outside of the boundary of an organisation as a result of actions by the organisation (e.g. the burning of the product coal from the proposed action by a third party to make steel or generate electricity).

Response to RFI Question 1: Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions associated with the proposed action

- 66) On 2 December 2022, the proponent responded to the department's RFI about the projected emissions associated with the proposed action. I noted that the department reviewed the information provided and sought clarification on the proponent's response. The proponent resubmitted their response to the RFI on 20 January 2025 and provided additional attachments supplementary to the RFI.
- 67) The proponent identified the activities resulting in scope 1, 2 and 3 greenhouse gas emissions associated with the proposed action. Scope 1 emissions from the proposed action are expected to occur through the combustion of diesel (2%) and the release of fugitive emissions (98%) over the 20-year mine production schedule. Scope 2 emissions from the proposed action will arise solely from the use of electricity. The scope 3 emissions derive from the combustion of saleable

product coal by third parties overseas (98%), with transportation of the product to markets accounting for most of the other 2% of emissions.

68) The proponent quantified the total and average annual estimated scope 1, 2 and 3 greenhouse gas emissions associated with the proposed action, within and outside Australia, as set out in Table 2 below. I note, based on these figures, that scope 1 emissions account for approximately 3.5% of total projected emissions from the proposed action and scope 2 emissions represent approximately 0.23% of total projected emissions from the proposed action. The majority of the emissions associated with the proposed action are scope 3 (approximately 96.27% of total projected emissions from the proposed action).

Table 2: Proponent’s estimate of greenhouse gas emissions associated with the proposed action (Mt CO₂-e)

| | Scope 1 | Scope 2 | Scope 3 | | Total (Scope 1, 2 & 3) | |
|-----------------------|-----------|---------|-----------|----------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| | Australia | | Australia | Overseas | Australia | Globally (includes Aust.) |
| Annual average | 0.81 | 0.05 | 0.05 | 22.48 | 0.92 | 23.40 |
| Total | 16.3 | 1.08 | 1.00 | 449.67* | 18.4 | 468.05 |

(The department brought to my attention a slight rounding error in the table.)

69) The proponent also advised that the proposed action’s *total average annual emissions* (scope 1, 2, and 3) within Australia represent 0.19% of Australia’s estimated annual national emissions from the Paris Agreement inventory for the 2020 reporting year, which was the latest year with reported data available at the time. The department advised that 2023 data is now available and based on the latest reported data, that the proposed action’s *total average annual emissions* (scope 1, 2, and 3) *within Australia* represent 0.16% of Australia’s estimated annual national emissions.

70) Further, the proponent advised the proposed action’s *total average annual emissions* (scope 1, 2 and 3) within Australia and outside Australia combined represent 0.0470% of global emissions (measured in CO₂-e) in 2019, which was the latest year with reported data available at the time. The department advised that 2022 data is now available and based on the latest reported data the department estimates that the proposed action’s *total average annual emissions* (scope 1, 2 and 3) *within Australia and outside Australia combined* represent 0.0467%.

Response to RFI Question 2: Emissions Management

71) The proponent also advised the department of the measures that are proposed to avoid, reduce and monitor emissions associated with the proposed action, including:

- a) Emissions will continue to be measured and reported in accordance with the NGER Act and associated regulations

- b) The proponent will comply with the Safeguard Mechanism, which establishes a scheme to limit emissions from certain reporting facilities and will apply to the Saraji East Mine for scope 1 emissions
- c) The proponent has reduced Scope 2 emissions with an agreement for supply of renewable energy for 50% of our demand across all Queensland mines by end of calendar year 2025. Options to increase to 100% renewable power supply for BMA options are also actively being explored.
- d) The proponent is working with Original Equipment Manufacturers to develop and trial battery electric technology to replace diesel trucks, which could be leveraged at mine sites.
- e) The proponent is also investigating methane abatement opportunities.

Response to RFI Question 3: Consumers of end-product

72) As noted above, the proponent predicted that the majority of the emissions associated with the proposed action are scope 3 emissions from the combustion of product coal by third parties. The proponent provided information about the customer countries/jurisdictions. They are ranked from largest to smallest by percentage of expected product volume in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Product destination by percentage of product volume

| Rank | Country / Jurisdiction | Product Volume (%) |
|------|------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. | South East Asia (SEA) | 24 |
| 2. | Japan | 24 |
| 3. | South Korea | 21 |
| 4. | Europe | 14 |
| 5. | Taiwan | 13 |
| 6. | South America | 2 |
| 7. | India | 1 |

73) I note that, apart from Taiwan, each customer country/jurisdiction is a party to the Paris Agreement.

74) I note that countries to which the coal is exported have announced or adopted domestic laws and policies to achieve their targets to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions as set out in their nationally determined contributions (**NDCs** – being emissions reduction commitments), set out in Table 4 below. The NDCs can be accessed via the United Nations NDC Registry at: <https://unfccc.int/NDCREG>

Table 4: The NDCs of each consumer country party to the Paris Agreement

| Country / Jurisdiction | NDC |
|------------------------|---|
| Japan | Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 46% by 2030 from 2013 levels. Net zero commitment by 2050. |

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| India | Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 45% per unit of Gross Domestic Product by 2030 from 2005 levels. Net zero commitment by 2070. |
| European Union (EU) | The EU and its Member States, acting jointly, are committed to a legally binding target of a domestic reduction of net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% compared to 1990 by 2030. |
| South Korea | Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40% by 2030 from 2018 levels. Net zero commitment by 2050. |
| South-East Asia (SEA) | While no specific countries were identified by the proponent, I note that the following countries from SEA have NDCs: Indonesia: Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 43.2% (conditional) against the 2030 business as usual. Net zero commitment by 2060. Malaysia: Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 45% in 2030 compared to 2005 level. Philippines: reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 75%. |
| South America | While no specific countries were identified by the proponent, I note that countries from South America with NDCs include: Argentina: goal is to not exceed their net greenhouse gas emissions of 349 Mt CO ₂ -e in 2030. Brazil: net-zero emissions of all greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 Chile: commits to a greenhouse gas emission budget not exceeding 1,100 Mt CO ₂ between 2020 and 2030, with a greenhouse gas emissions maximum by 2025 and a greenhouse gas emissions level of 95 Mt CO ₂ by 2030. Ecuador: commits, under its unconditional scenario, to achieving a projected reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2035 of approximately 8.800 kt CO ₂ -eq. Paraguay: commits to reduce 20% of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. Peru: commits to not exceed 208,8 Mt CO ₂ eq in 2030 (unconditional). Venezuela: commits to reduce 20% of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. |

75) I note that Taiwan's Intended NDC (enforced under its Greenhouse Gas Reduction and Management Act) is comparable to those of countries who are signatories to the Paris Agreement and includes:

- a) Reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2050 from 2005 levels.
- b) 20% of energy to come from renewable sources and 50% from low carbon natural gas by 2025.
- c) Investment in green technology and improve energy efficiency.

International coal initiatives

- 76) There are several international voluntary initiatives concerning the phase out of unabated coal power generation. These include the Powering Past Coal Alliance, which commits members to phase out existing unabated coal power generation, and the No New Coal Coalition, which commits parties to not build any new or additional coal power projects.
- a) Of the countries included in Table 4, the Netherlands (part of the EU) is the only export destination to have joined either initiative (they joined the Powering Past Coal Alliance). Despite this, global momentum continues to grow on the phase out of unabated coal fired power generation.

International momentum behind the transition away from fossil fuels

- 77) The Global Stocktake, agreed at 28th Conference of the Parties (**COP28**) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (**UNFCCC**), saw parties agree to transition away from fossil fuels in energy systems. This is the first time all parties to the Paris Agreement have acknowledged the need to transition away from fossil fuels under the UNFCCC.
- 78) The Global Stocktake decision also called on parties to the Paris Agreement to triple renewable energy capacity globally and doubling the global average annual rate of energy efficiency improvements by 2030, and to accelerate efforts towards the *phase-down* of unabated coal power.
- a) Over 120 countries, including Australia, also signed the Global Pledge on Renewables and Energy Efficiency, which commits them to work together to triple the world's installed renewable energy generation capacity to at least 11,000 gigawatts (GW) by 2030 and collectively to double the global average annual rate of energy efficiency improvements from around 2% to over 4% every year until 2030.
- b) Of the export destinations in Table 4, Malaysia, Japan, South Korea and the Netherlands (part of EU) joined the Pledge.

Regional Action

- 79) The Asia-Pacific Energy Cooperation has set two energy goals through its Energy Working Group:
- a) To improve energy intensity by at least 45 percent by 2035 compared to 2005 levels;
- b) To double the share of modern renewables in the energy mix by 2030, relative to the numbers from 2010.
- 80) The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (**ASEAN**), while not having an emissions reduction target, does have the:
- a) *ASEAN Strategy for Carbon Neutrality*, which includes eight strategies to deliver the carbon-neutral journey;

- b) *ASEAN Plan of Action of Energy Cooperation*, which sets aspirational targets of 23% share of Renewable Energy in total primary energy supply, and 35% share of renewable energy in ASEAN installed power capacity by 2025.
- 81) The European Council and Parliament reached a provisional agreement on a new EU Regulation to reduce energy sector methane emissions in Europe and in global supply chains in November 2023.
- a) The regulation will oblige the fossil gas, oil and coal industry to properly measure, monitor, report and verify their methane emissions according to the highest monitoring standards, and take action to reduce them.
 - b) The agreement now requires formal adoption by both the European Parliament and the Council. Once this process is completed, the new legislation will be published in the Official Journal of the Union and enter into force.
- 82) In 2023 the Asia Zero Emissions Community (AZEC) was launched by 11 partner countries to advance decarbonisation in Asia towards the goal of carbon neutrality while achieving economic growth and energy security. During the launch, the then Japanese Prime Minister Kishida said the community would ‘create a huge new decarbonisation market in Asia.’ Countries apply for Japanese funding for energy projects through the AZEC. Most approved projects have been fossil fuel-based technologies such as Liquefied Natural Gas (**LNG**), ammonia co-firing with coal plants and carbon capture and storage.

Japanese policies that may reduce demand for Australian coal

- 83) There are no explicit statements from the Japanese government that they plan to completely phase out coal in their domestic energy system. However, Japan has clearly signalled a plan to reduce coal use in favour of renewable alternatives in their Outline of Strategic Energy Plan (**OSEP**).
- a) The OSEP involves reducing LNG for energy generation from 37% in 2019 to 20% in 2030, with concurrent increases in the adoption of nuclear and renewable energy for electricity generation.
 - b) Japan’s Prime Minister at the time, Kishida, told COP28 delegates that ‘In line with its pathway to net-zero, Japan will end new construction of domestic unabated coal power plants, while securing a stable energy supply.’ Comment was also made by Japan’s Chief Cabinet Secretary that ‘Japan's policy is to reduce the ratio of coal-fired thermal power generation while introducing renewable energy to the maximum extent possible, and to steadily phase out inefficient coal-fired power generation by 2030.... And replace coal-fired power generation with zero-carbon alternatives such as hydrogen, ammonia, Carbon Capture and Storage (**CCUS**) and other resources.’
- 84) Similarly, in their First NDC (22 October 2021) they explained that to meet their goal of net-zero by 2050, ‘Japan will put forward all possible efforts in all areas including by thorough energy efficiency measures, maximum introduction of renewable energy, as well as decarbonization of public sectors and local communities.’

- 85) Japan has several policies in place that will reduce the use of coal. In December 2022, the Japanese government announced Japan's Green Transformation (**GX**) Strategy to drive economic growth and development through emissions mitigation. The GX Strategy is economy wide, covering the energy, transport, built environment, industry and finance sectors. The GX Strategy targets in the energy and industry sectors that will likely impact demand for Australian coal include:
- a) to reach 36-38% of renewable energy in the country's power mix by 2030
 - b) to install 10 GW of Offshore Wind Power and 104-118 GW Solar Power by 2030
 - c) to restart nuclear power and aim for 20-22% of country's power mix by 2030
 - d) to establish successful cases of ammonia / hydrogen co-firing by 2024, so as to support development of supply chain starting 2025, and to achieve lowered costs by 2030
 - e) to expand supply of green steel to 10 million tonnes by 2030
 - f) to cut 30% of CO₂ emission in steel industry from 2013 levels by 2030
- 86) To assist in meeting these targets, the Japanese government has committed 20 trillion yen (about 140 billion US dollars) of government funding to the GX Strategy to realise, within the next ten years, a combined total investment of 150 trillion yen in green transformation, from both the public and private sectors. Some of this funding has so far been allocated to:
- a) Support for hydrogen, investment in hard to abate sectors, energy efficiency, next generation renewable energy technologies, start-ups and small and medium-size enterprises (**SMEs**) in green transformation sectors (13 trillion yen in total).
 - b) Tax credits to support the production of green steel.
 - c) Subsidy scheme to cover the cost gap between low-carbon hydrogen (and its derivatives) and fossil equivalents.
- 87) In addition, an Emissions Trading Scheme will be implemented in phases from 2026 for sectors with high emissions; and from 2028, a Carbon Levy targeting fossil fuel importers such as power, oil and gas companies, will be introduced with a gradual increase to incentivise GX investments to reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

Korean policies that may reduce demand for Australian coal

- 88) The largest source of the Republic of Korea's (ROK) annual greenhouse gas emissions is electricity and heat production (53%). Coal has traditionally been the largest energy source for electricity production in ROK (33%), followed closely by natural gas and nuclear power.
- 89) In the ROK's Enhanced Update of its First NDC (23 December 2021) they explained that 'aged coal power plants will be shut down or shift their fuels from coal to Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG)' to meet their 2030 targets.

- 90) The ROK's 11th Basic Energy Plan for Electricity Supply and Demand, released in 2025, has set a target to reduce the share of coal-derived electricity.
- 91) The ROK plans that the proportion of carbon-free power generation, which is based on nuclear power and renewable energy, is designed to increase from 39.1% in 2023 to 53.0% in 2030 and 70.7% in 2038.
- 92) Investment in renewables is focussed on solar, offshore and onshore wind. In 2021, the Framework Act on Carbon Neutrality and Green Growth for Coping with Climate Crisis was passed to strengthen policy measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions using green technology and green industry.
- 93) Behind the electricity sector, the ROK's iron and steel sector are next most reliant on coal. The South Korean Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy (**MOTIE's**) Steel Industry Development Strategy for Transition to Low-Carbon Steel includes financial incentives to support the sector's transition to low emissions production (i.e. by phasing out coal-intensive blast furnaces).

Chinese policies that may reduce demand for Australian Coal

- 94) In China's Enhanced Update of its First NDC (28 October 2021) they explained that:
- a) 'China will stringently curb coal-powered projects, set strict limitation on the increase in coal consumption over the 14th five-year plan (FYP) period and to phase it down in the 15th FYP period. The large-scale development of wind and solar power will be accelerated, hydro power in accordance with local condition will be developed, nuclear power will be advanced in an ordered manner with the premise of ensured safety, and peaking power including energy storage and gas-powered electricity will be stepped up rapidly.'
 - a) In Hong Kong 'in the energy sector, coal is gradually replaced by natural gas for electricity generation.'
 - b) In Macao 'the proportion of electricity generated using natural gas increased from 30.9% in 2008 to 72.6% in 2019' and they have introduced 'natural gas buses and electric taxis'.
- 95) Just ahead of COP29 in 2024, China published its Annual Report on China's Policies and Actions to address Climate Change (2024), that summarises China's progress in responding to climate change since 2023. In 2023, the share of non-fossil energy in China's total energy consumption grew to 17.9 percent, and the share of coal consumption dropped from 67.4 percent in 2013 to 55.3 percent. The annual power generation from renewable energy sources accounted for about one-third of the total electricity consumption.
- 96) China is rapidly scaling up electricity storage capacity. This has the potential to significantly reduce China's reliance on coal- and gas-fired power plants to meet peaks in electricity demand and to facilitate the integration of larger amounts of variable wind and solar power into the grid.
- 97) China has made significant investments in renewable energies, including almost two-thirds of global wind and solar projects under construction in recent years.

International framework for addressing climate change

- 98) The international climate treaties – the Paris Agreement, adopted on 12 December 2015 and the UNFCCC, adopted on 9 May 1992 – are the primary multilateral mechanisms governing the international response to climate change.
- 99) The Paris Agreement entered into force on 4 November 2016. There are 198 parties to the UNFCCC, of which 195 are parties to the Paris Agreement, including Australia. I note that on 20 January 2025, the United States initiated the process to withdraw from the Paris Agreement. This process will take approximately 12 months to be finalised. Once finalised there will be 194 parties to the Paris Agreement. The Paris Agreement ‘aims to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty, including by:
- a) Holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change;’.
- 100) Under the Paris Agreement, all parties must prepare, communicate and maintain successive NDCs and pursue domestic mitigation measures, with the aim of achieving the objectives of such contributions. Under the Paris Agreement, emissions that occur within a party’s jurisdiction are accounted for within that party’s national greenhouse gas inventory. Emissions associated with the combustion of exported Australian coal are accounted for in the national greenhouse gas inventories of the importing countries.
- 101) In Australia, emissions reduction targets and national climate mitigation policies are the responsibility of the Minister for Climate Change and Energy, the Hon Chris Bowen MP.
- 102) Under Article 4 of the Paris Agreement, Parties ‘aim to reach global peaking of greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible, recognizing that peaking will take longer for developing country Parties, and to undertake rapid reductions thereafter in accordance with best available science, so as to achieve a balance between anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks of greenhouse gases in the second half of this century, on the basis of equity, and in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty.
- 103) The Australian Government has committed to reduce national greenhouse gas emissions, track progress towards those commitments, and report annually on Australia’s greenhouse gas emissions. Australia submitted its first NDC to the UNFCCC in 2015. In June 2022, Australia submitted an updated NDC that strengthens our 2030 target to 43% below 2005 levels and reaffirms the net zero emissions by 2050 target.
- 104) On 12 December 2023, the Australian Government agreed to the Parties’ first Global Stocktake under the Paris Agreement. Paragraph 28 of the Global Stocktake report ‘calls on Parties to contribute to the following global efforts, in a nationally determined manner, taking into account the Paris Agreement and their different national circumstances, pathways and approaches:

- a) Tripling renewable energy capacity globally and doubling the global average annual rate of energy efficiency improvements by 2030;
- b) Accelerating efforts towards the phase-down of unabated coal power;
- c) Accelerating efforts globally towards net zero emission energy systems, utilizing zero- and low-carbon fuels well before or by around mid-century;
- d) Transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just, orderly and equitable manner, accelerating action in this critical decade, so as to achieve net zero by 2050 in keeping with the science;
- e) Accelerating zero- and low-emission technologies, including, among other things, renewables, nuclear, abatement and removal technologies such as carbon capture and utilization and storage, particularly in hard-to-abate sectors, and low-carbon hydrogen production;
- f) Accelerating and substantially reducing non-carbon-dioxide emissions globally, including in particular methane emissions by 2030;
- g) Accelerating the reduction of emissions from road transport on a range of pathways, including through development of infrastructure and rapid deployment of zero and low-emission vehicles;
- h) Phasing out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies that do not address energy poverty or just transitions, as soon as possible’.

Domestic Measures

105) The *Climate Change Act 2022* (Cth) enshrines Australia’s emissions reduction targets in legislation – 43% below 2005 levels by 2030 and net zero emissions by 2050.

106) These targets are supported by a suite of measures, including:

- a) The Australian Government’s commitment to 82% renewable electricity by 2030, a national target to ensure a timely transition away from reliance on increasingly unreliable and uneconomic ageing coal generation to a more reliable system with lower cost and emissions.
- b) A Capacity Investment Scheme, to encourage new investment in renewable energy by underwriting 23 GW renewable generation and 9 GW clean dispatchable capacity.
- c) The National Reconstruction Fund, which will provide up to \$3 billion for renewable and low emissions technology investment.
- d) The decarbonisation of existing industries and creation of new clean energy industries through the \$1.9 billion Powering the Regions Fund.

- e) The National Energy Transformation Partnership to coordinate action by the Commonwealth states and territories to achieve net zero emissions in the electricity system by 2050 and reach 82% renewable electricity by 2030.
- f) \$20 billion investment to upgrade the electricity grid to manage more renewable energy through the Rewiring the Nation program.
- g) Introducing climate reporting standards for financial institutions and large publicly listed companies.
- h) \$224.3 million investment in new community batteries across Australia to support the grid and maximise the benefits of Australia's rooftop solar installations, through the Community Batteries for Household Solar program.
- i) \$102.2 million for the Community Solar Banks program to establish solar banks around Australia, providing access to solar for around 25,000 households who are unable to install rooftop solar.
- j) \$83.8 million to develop and deploy microgrid technology across First Nations communities.
- k) Australia's first National Electric Vehicle Strategy.
- l) The Future Gas Strategy that maps the Australian Government's plan for how gas will support the Australian economy's transition to net zero.
- m) Reforms to the Safeguard Mechanism
- n) National Hydrogen Strategy.

Future Gas Strategy

107) In May 2024, the Federal Government released the Future Gas Strategy (**the strategy**) which maps the plan for how gas will support the transition to net zero. The objectives of the strategy are to:

- a) support decarbonisation of the Australia economy
- b) safeguard energy security and affordability
- c) entrench Australia's reputation as an attractive trade and investment destination
- d) help our trade partners on their own paths to net zero.

108) The strategy outlines the role that gas will have in helping both Australian and international economies transition to global net zero. The long-term role of gas-powered generation is to provide firming and peaking support as the grid becomes increasingly powered by renewable energy.

109) Additionally, the strategy outlines that LNG will continue to play a significant role in reducing the carbon intensity of the region's energy mix, particularly by replacing more emission intensive fuels like coal, while supporting energy security and stability.

110) Importantly, the strategy specifies that the current emissions from the extraction and production of gas must reduce for Australia to reach net zero by 2050.

Safeguard Mechanism

111) The Safeguard Mechanism requires Australia's largest greenhouse gas emitters to keep their net emissions below emissions limits (**baselines**). The Safeguard Mechanism applies to facilities that have direct (scope 1) emissions of more than 100,000 tonnes CO₂-e in a financial year.

112) The reformed Safeguard Mechanism commenced on 1 July 2023 and requires facility baselines to decline each year, reducing net emissions in line with Australia's climate targets. The reforms introduced a requirement that information on scope 1 emissions provided in the course of EPBC assessment must be reported to the Climate Change Authority, the Minister for Climate Change and the Secretary of the relevant department, on approval of the action if the action is likely to result in:

- a) A new designated facility (that is, a facility the operation of which will result in a total amount of covered emissions of greenhouse gases during a financial year with a carbon dioxide equivalence exceeding 100,000 tonnes or more), or
- b) an increase in the emissions of a facility which is already covered by the Safeguard Mechanism.

113) The proponent advised in its response to the RFI that its facility, which is the subject of the proposed action, will be covered by the Safeguard Mechanism.

Coal Markets

114) The IEA has been publishing coal market reports every December since 2011. *Coal 2024*, released in December 2024, provides an analysis of recent trends in coal demand, supply and trade, as well as forecasts to 2027. Key findings of *Coal 2024* include the following:

- a) In 2023, global coal demand increased to a record 8.69 billion tonnes and is expected to reach another new record high of 8.77 billion tonnes in 2024.
- b) Global coal demand is expected to grow by 1% in 2024 and is set to plateau through to 2027, representing a considerable slowdown in growth from previous years.
- c) India and China are expected to increase their coal demand whilst drops in consumption in the European Union and the United States continue, although the rate of decline is now slowing.
- d) In 2024, global coal production is expected to reach a record high surpassing 9 billion tonnes.
- e) Australia is set to become the fourth largest producer by 2027, surpassing the United States and Russia, due to international sanctions, even with the forecasted decrease in production and domestic demand.

- f) International trade volumes are expected to reach a record high in 2024 before receding with the trade reshuffle continuing to flow towards Asia, including a resumption of Australia exporting into China
- g) Coal remains profitable with coal exporters, with Russia as the main exception, making solid profits overall.

Statutory framework for reconsideration decisions

- 115) I noted that, pursuant to section 78C of the EPBC Act, I must reconsider the original referral decision and either confirm the decision or revoke the decision in accordance with subsection 78(1), and substitute a new decision for it.
- 116) Under section 78(1) of the EPBC Act, I may revoke a decision made under section 75(1) about an action and substitute a new decision under that section for the first decision, but only if one of the circumstances in section 78(1)(a)-(d) applies.
- 117) EJA's reconsideration request was made on the basis of section 78(1)(a). EJA submitted that I should be satisfied that the revocation and substitution is warranted by the availability of substantial new information about the impacts that the action has or will have or is likely to have on a matter protected by a provision of Part 3 (**protected matter**) (paragraph 78(1)(a)).
- 118) The department advised that section 78(1)(aa) contained another ground for reconsideration which appeared potentially applicable having regard to the information in EJA's request and provided through the section 78B consultation process. Under section 78(1)(aa), I may revoke a decision and substitute a new decision if I am satisfied that the revocation and substitution is warranted by a substantial change in circumstances that was not foreseen at the time of the first decision has occurred that relates to the impacts that the action has or will have or is likely to have on a protected matter.
- 119) Under section 75 of the EPBC Act, I am required to decide whether the action that is the subject of the referred proposal is a controlled action, and which provisions of Part 3 (if any) are controlling provisions for the action. In making my decision, I must consider all adverse impacts the action has, will have, or is likely to have, on the matter(s) protected by a provision (or provisions) of Part 3. I must not consider any beneficial impacts the action has, will have or is likely to have on the protected matters.
- 120) Section 391 provides that I must take account of the precautionary principle in making a decision under section 75, to the extent I can do so consistently with the other provisions of the EPBC Act. The department advised that, while a reconsideration decision is not a decision listed in section 391 as a decision where the precautionary principle must be taken into account, section 78C(1) requires me to reconsider a section 75 decision, and a section 75 decision is listed in section 391.

Findings on material questions of fact

- 121) My findings on material questions of fact in relation to my reconsideration decision, addressing the relevant requirements of the EPBC Act, are set out below.

122) The reconsideration request of 8 July 2022 says that there is substantial new information about the impacts that the proposed action has or will have, or is likely to have, on various matters protected by Part 3 of the EPBC Act and that this warrants the revocation and substitution of the original referral decision. My consideration of the reconsideration request and findings are set out below, with respect to each of the protected matters specified in the request:

- a) the world heritage values of declared World Heritage properties (sections 12 and 15A)
- b) the National Heritage values of National Heritage places (sections 15B and 15C)
- c) the ecological character of declared Ramsar wetlands (sections 16 and 17B)
- d) listed threatened species in the critically endangered category (section 18(2))
- e) listed threatened species in the endangered category (section 18(3))
- f) listed threatened species in the vulnerable category (section 18(4))
- g) listed threatened ecological communities in the critically endangered category (section 18(5))
- h) listed threatened ecological communities in the endangered category (section 18(6))
- i) listed threatened species and listed threatened ecological communities (section 18A)
- j) listed migratory species (sections 20 and 20A)
- k) the environment in Commonwealth marine areas (sections 23(2), 24A(3), (4)) (containing listed marine species)
- l) the environment in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (sections 24B(2), 24C(5), (7)).

123) I also considered whether any of the grounds at sections 78(1)(aa) to (d) may be the basis for a decision to reconsider the original referral decision. I accepted the department's advice that they would not be, for the following reasons:

- a) The requirements for the grounds at sections 78(1)(b) to (ca) are not met because the original referral decision was a controlled action decision, and those grounds only apply where the original referral decision was that the action was 'not a controlled action'.
- b) The requirement for the ground at section 78(1)(d) is not met because the reconsideration request was not made under section 79.
- c) The requirements for the ground at section 78(1)(aa) are not met because, for the reasons set out with respect to the ground at section 78(1)(a), below and having regard to the information provided by EJA and through the section 78B consultation process, I was not satisfied that there has been a substantial change in circumstances that relates to the impacts of the action.

World heritage values of declared World Heritage properties (sections 12 and 15A)***Referral information***

124) The original referral decision does not include this controlling provision because the proposed action does not occur within or adjacent to any declared World Heritage properties. I considered it unlikely that the proposed action would have a significant impact on the world heritage values of declared World Heritage properties given the nature and scale of the proposed action, its potential impacts, and its distance from declared World Heritage properties.

125) I note that the delegate did not consider climate-related evidence in relation to this protected matter at the time of the referral decision on 18 November 2016. No consideration was given to potential climate change flow-on effects of greenhouse gas emissions, or greenhouse gas emissions, as impacts on protected matters from the proposed action.

Substantial new information about the impacts of the proposed action

126) In the reconsideration request, EJA identified over 470 documents that it considers demonstrate the likely significant impacts of climate change on matters protected under this controlling provision. These publicly available documents include World Heritage nominations, management plans for World Heritage properties and the IUCN World Heritage Outlook

127) I found that this information is substantial new information as:

- a) much of the information contained in the reconsideration request was not before me and so is considered new information; and
- a) the information is of substance and is not trivial or inconsequential, and demonstrates that climate change has various effects on this protected matter.

128) The information in the reconsideration request identifies 17 of the 20 Australian declared World Heritage properties as likely to be impacted by climate change:

- a) Budj Bim Cultural Landscape
- b) Fossil Mammal Sites
- c) Gondwana Rainforests of Australia
- d) Great Barrier Reef
- e) Greater Blue Mountains
- f) Heard and MacDonal Islands
- g) K'gari (Fraser Island)
- h) Kakadu
- i) Lord Howe Island
- j) Macquarie Island
- k) Ningaloo Coast
- l) Purnululu National Park

- m) Shark Bay
- n) Tasmanian Wilderness
- o) Uluru Kata-Tjuta National Park
- p) Wet Tropics of Queensland
- q) Willandra Lakes Region

129) The information in the reconsideration request identifies that climate change and its flow-on effects are affecting or will affect the ecology of the identified declared World Heritage properties. Based on the information provided, the extent of the effects appears to vary between the properties, reflecting their unique natural environments. In summary, World Heritage properties containing ecosystems and/or species with low temperature range tolerances (e.g. alpine and coastal environments) are more susceptible to climate change. In general, climate change reduces the resilience of ecosystems due to the increased risks from a range of factors including:

- a) Altered (or reduced) abundance and distribution of species critical (and/or unique) to the ecological integrity of the property.
- a) Altered hydrological flows causing increasing incursions of saltwater into freshwater (and the reverse) damaging important feeding and breeding habitat.
- b) Invasive/pest species gaining a greater foothold.
- c) Extreme temperature events causing heat stress to susceptible plants and animals (e.g. the Spectacled Flying Fox *Pteropus conspicillatus*).
- d) Altered or inappropriate fire regimes associated with temperature extremes.

Does the information relate to the impacts that the proposed action has or will have, or is likely to have, on the world heritage values of a declared World Heritage property?

130) I noted that the information in the reconsideration request identified that climate change is having or will have adverse effects on the flora, fauna and ecosystems of the identified World Heritage properties. This will, in turn, have adverse effects on the world heritage values of those properties. Whether the information relates to adverse impacts of the proposed action on this protected matter is discussed below.

131) I accepted the department's advice that, to be satisfied under section 78(1)(a) of the EPBC Act that revocation and substitution of the original referral decision is warranted by the availability of substantial new information, I must be satisfied that the information is about the impacts the proposed action has or will have, or is likely to have, on one or more of the relevant protected matters.

132) For the reasons explained below, I was not satisfied that the information is about the impacts of the proposed action, in accordance with the meaning of 'impact' in s 527E of the EPBC Act.

Statutory test

133) Section 527E of the EPBC Act defines ‘impact’ for the purposes of the Act. An event or circumstance is an impact of a proposed action if:

- a) the event or circumstance is a direct consequence of the action (s 527E(1)(a)), or
- b) for an event or circumstance that is an indirect consequence of the action – subject to sub-s 527E(2), the action is a substantial cause of that event or circumstance (s 527E(1)(b)).

134) Section 527E(2) provides for the purposes of paragraph (1)(b) that if:

- (a) a person (the primary person) takes an action (the primary action); and
- (b) as a consequence of the primary action, another person (the secondary person) takes another action (the secondary action); and
- (c) the secondary action is not taken at the direction or request of the primary person; and
- (d) an event or circumstance is a consequence of the secondary action;

then that event or circumstance is an impact of the primary action only if:

- (e) the primary action facilitates, to a major extent, the secondary action; and
- (f) the secondary action is:
 - (i) within the contemplation of the primary person; or
 - (ii) a reasonably foreseeable consequence of the primary action; and
- (g) the event or circumstance is:
 - (i) within the contemplation of the primary person; or
 - (ii) a reasonably foreseeable consequence of the secondary action.

135) I considered that the reconsideration request contains information which demonstrates in a general sense that climate change from anthropogenic sources of GHG emissions has and/or will have physical effects on protected matters. In particular, I accepted that the combustion of coal and/or gas on a global scale results in GHG emissions, which increases the effects of climate change, including the regularity, scope and intensity of climate hazards. I accepted that these effects of climate change will adversely affect the MNES identified by EJA in their application.

136) To the extent the information may be relevant to the physical effects of climate change caused by the proposed action, the reconsideration request contains information about emissions resulting from the combustion by third parties of the coal to be extracted in the proposed action. I accepted the department’s advice that, having regard to the information provided by EJA and through the section 78B consultation process, the physical effects of climate change on the world heritage values of declared World Heritage properties (which the request is about) are, if anything, *indirect consequences* of the proposed action: they are events or circumstances

that are removed in time and distance from the taking of the action, which is the extraction of coal.

137) Therefore, I determined that for the information in the reconsideration request to be about the impacts of the proposed action under section 527E of the EPBC Act, it must show that the proposed action is a substantial cause of the physical effects of climate change on the world heritage values of a declared World Heritage property.

Applying the statutory test

138) I determined that the proposed action is not a substantial cause of the stated physical effects of climate change on the world heritage values of declared World Heritage properties. Therefore, the information is not about impacts the proposed action has or will have, or is likely to have, on the world heritage values of declared World Heritage properties. As explained below, this is because:

- a) The information does not demonstrate that the proposed action will cause any net increase in global GHG emissions and global average temperature (and so, any of the stated physical effects of climate change on the world heritage values of declared World Heritage properties). I considered that whether this will happen is subject to multiple variables; and
- b) Even if that were demonstrated, any contribution from the proposed action to global GHG emissions would be very small. It is therefore not possible to say that the proposed action will be a substantial cause of the stated physical effects of climate change on the world heritage values of declared World Heritage properties.

Will the proposed action cause a net increase in GHG emissions and global average temperature?

139) I accepted the department's advice that the likely contribution of the proposed action's emissions towards a net increase in global GHG emissions and global average temperature is subject to a number of variables.

140) One variable is whether any emissions generated by the combustion of the coal from the proposed action will be offset, mitigated or abated. The countries or jurisdictions where the prospective buyers of the coal are expected to combust the coal may at any time implement new policies or regulations regarding emissions within their borders.

141) As set out at paragraph 74 above, the countries where it is anticipated that the coal from the proposed action will be consumed, apart from Taiwan, each have respective NDCs under the Paris Agreement to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Under the Paris Agreement (referred to at paragraphs 98 to 104 above), each Party must submit an NDC every five years. These NDCs are required to reflect increased ambition over time. Parties may also submit new or updated NDCs at any time. The emissions generated by combusting coal (including coal from the proposed action) would be counted as scope 1 emissions in the country where combustion occurred and may be subject to mitigation actions or offsetting. These emissions may also qualify as the indirect scope 3 emissions of the source country (in this case, Australia).

142) Further, as set out at paragraph 104 above, a Global Stocktake has been agreed to by Parties under the Paris Agreement, which includes a call to transition away from fossil fuels in energy

systems to achieve net zero by 2050. As set out at paragraphs 79 to 82 there are international and regional initiatives including the Powering Past Coal Alliance, Global Pledge on Renewables and Energy Efficiency and ASEAN Plan of Action on Energy Cooperation, which are directed at encouraging a transition from coal powered energy to renewable energy.

- 143) Taiwan is not a member of the United Nations and is excluded from the UNFCCC. Domestically, however, it has an Intended NDC that includes a 2030 target and has committed to net zero emissions by 2050.
- 144) The level of global GHG emissions will also likely be subject to the emissions reduction policies of power companies, and any changes to the efficiency of their power plants. I noted that the department provided examples of changes to the emissions reduction policies of certain companies. For example: power companies in Japan have committed to being carbon-neutral by 2050 including phasing out inefficient power plants. In addition to the initiatives mentioned above, the department notes that ongoing research is being undertaken to reduce GHG emissions from steel production. However, the department notes that there are no international GHG reduction initiatives for steel production, similar to GHG reduction initiatives for power generation.
- 145) More broadly, I accepted the department's advice that, if the proposed action does not proceed, this will not necessarily affect the level of GHG emissions worldwide or the extent to which the world heritage values of declared World Heritage properties will be impacted by the physical effects of climate change stated in the request. That will be subject to a range of other factors, including the level of emissions from sources other than the proposed action.
- 146) I considered that these factors make it very difficult to estimate the likely net increase (if any) in global GHG emissions from the proposed action's emissions and, by extension, the extent of any net increase in global average temperature and the extent to which the world heritage values of declared World Heritage properties will be impacted by the stated physical effects of climate change.
- 147) I considered that it is also likely that, if the proposed action does not proceed, the prospective buyers will purchase an equivalent amount of coal from a supplier other than the proponent, which would result in at least an equivalent amount of GHG emissions when combusted, when compared with the amount estimated for the proposed action.
- 148) I took into account that the IEA *Coal 2023* report notes that, although coal demand will fall in almost all advanced economies, the European Union and the United States with the biggest drops, the growth in China, India, Indonesia, Vietnam, and the Philippines will more than offset these decreases on a global level.
- 149) I considered that it is reasonable to assume that, should the proposed action not proceed, the market would respond through an increase in supply elsewhere, in circumstances where there is still anticipated demand for the coal from the proposed action, particularly noting that 85% of the end use of product coal is intended for steelmaking. I noted that both thermal and coking coal will be extracted from the proposed action and that there are no current viable alternatives at scale to meet global demand for steel.

150) I took into account EJA's submissions that it is not possible for me to be satisfied that the same or a worse impact will necessarily occur in scenarios without the proposed project. EJA stated that:

It is not open to you to rationally be satisfied that the same or worse impact will necessarily occur in scenarios without the Proposed Project. That is because, the best feasible future scenarios (in terms of total future emissions before the achievement of net zero greenhouse gas emissions, and consequent level of warming) cannot eventuate if the Proposed Project is to exist. ...

This can be explained by a simple hypothetical. If a coal miner refers a proposed coal mine to the Minister, by which it proposes to extract and sell 10 Mtpa of thermal coal on the seaborne thermal coal market, every year from 2030 to 2050, the Minister must, in making the section 75 decision, assume that coal mine will exist. The minimum likely significant impacts from the accumulated greenhouse gas emissions, including those from that coal mine, are the minimum impacts from a total temperature increase of total future emissions in a world in which: (a) there is a coal market out to 2050; (b) within that coal market, there is a seaborne thermal coal market out to 2050; (c) within that thermal seaborne coal market out to 2050, there is sufficient demand for seaborne thermal coal such that all of the coal from the proposed coal mine is burned, together with all of the more desirable coal on the seaborne thermal coal market from 2030 to 2050 (with desirability determined by the market, primarily by reference to quality, cost and price). By contrast, if the existence of that mine is not assumed, there are feasible scenarios available where there is no coal market out to 2050, no seaborne thermal coal market, or a smaller seaborne thermal coal market out to 2050. As demonstrated by [IPCC] WGIII AR6, there is a large range of better feasible scenarios (in terms of lowest temperature increase) which are simply not available if one assumes the existence of the coal mine with 10Mtpa on the seaborne thermal coal market out to 2050.

The same analysis is available for the Proposed Project. It could be precisely modelled for the Proposed Project, but detailed modelling is not necessary to demonstrate it as a matter of logic.

It follows that it would be irrational to conclude that the likely significant impacts will necessarily be the same with or without the Proposed Project.

151) The reconsideration request also stated that, in all feasible scenarios in which the proposed action is carried out, there will very likely be physical effects of climate change on World Heritage properties, and, conversely, that feasible scenarios with lesser increases in those effects are available in a future without the proposed action.

152) I agreed with the department's advice that EJA's analysis at paragraph 150 above does not address the relevant statutory question, which requires me to consider, in light of new information, whether the proposed action is a substantial cause of the event or circumstance, as outlined at paragraphs 133 to 137 above.

Even if the proposed action were to cause a net increase in GHG emissions and global average temperature, would it be a substantial cause of any physical effects of climate change on the world heritage values of declared World Heritage Properties?

- 153) In addition, and in any event, I considered whether, if the information in the reconsideration request demonstrated that the proposed action would result in a net increase in global GHG emissions and global average temperature, that increase would be a substantial cause of the physical effects of climate change on the world heritage values of declared World Heritage properties. I determined that there is no reasonable basis for concluding that the proposed action will be a *substantial cause* of those effects.
- 154) As outlined at paragraph 67 above, in response to a request by the department for information, the proponent provided information demonstrating that the average total annual GHG emissions (scope 1, 2 and 3) from the proposed action represents approximately 23.4 Mt CO₂-e or 0.0470% of global annual emissions (measured in CO₂-e). The proponent used Climate Watch's Historical GHG Emissions 2019 data, the latest data available at the time, as the basis for its calculations, consistently with the department's request for information. Since then, the department noted that 2022 data had been reported. Based on the latest available data, the department estimated that the proposed action's total average annual emissions (scope 1, 2 and 3) within Australia and outside Australia combined represent 0.0467% of the 2022 global annual emissions.
- 155) Further, the proponent estimated, in response to the same request for information, that the total GHG emissions associated with the proposed action would be approximately 468/05 Mt CO₂-e. I noted that the department estimated that the likely increase in global temperature that could arise from the proposed action's estimated total GHG emissions, in a scenario where it could be shown that the proposed action would result in a net increase in global GHG emissions and global average temperature, is approximately 0.00021°C. The department prepared this estimate assuming a one-for-one relationship between temperature and tonnes of GHG emissions, based on the information EJA provided about findings by the IPCC Working Group I that the relationship between anthropogenic CO₂ and global temperature has thus far been approximately linear, meaning that each 1,000 gigatons of cumulative CO₂ emissions contributes to an approximate 0.45°C increase in global temperature.
- 156) The IEA *Coal 2024* report also noted global coal consumption in 2023 was 8,687 million tonnes. The proposed action's maximum annual output is 23.4 million tonnes per annum (**Mtpa**) and this represents 0.09% of the global coal consumption that was reached for 2022. The department estimates that, based on the latest IEA Coal data, the proposed action's maximum annual output represents 0.08% of the global coal consumption. The IEA *Coal 2024* report notes that global coal demand in 2024 will surpass 8.77 billion tonnes for the first time. The figures above reflect recent data regarding coal consumption. I accepted the department's advice that future coal demand cannot be predicted with any certainty and is subject to a wide range of variables.
- 157) In considering the amounts outlined above, I noted that the IPCC has estimated that total warming from GHG emissions to date is approximately 1.09°C. In view of the amounts outlined at paragraphs 154 to 156 above, I found that the amount of coal to be combusted from the

proposed action, and any possible increase in net global GHG emissions and global average temperature that would result from combusting this amount of coal, are very small. I concluded that the proposed action would not be a ‘substantial’ cause of the physical effects of climate change on World Heritage properties.

158) The reconsideration request asserts that ‘there is an approximately linear relationship between cumulative anthropogenic CO₂ emissions and global temperature, such that every tonne of CO₂ emissions adds to global warming’, and I accepted this. However, for the reasons discussed above, I did not accept that the contribution that this action makes to emissions will be a ‘substantial cause’ of the physical effects of climate change on the world heritage values of declared World Heritage properties

Policy Statement on ‘Indirect consequences’ of an action

159) I noted that the reconsideration request cites the following excerpt from the department’s *Policy Statement on ‘Indirect consequences’ of an action: Section 527E of the EPBC Act (Policy Statement)*. In the Policy Statement, this excerpt appears under the heading: ‘is the impact too remote from the action?’:

...an impact that evidence strongly suggests might manifest itself many years later, or occurs at a substantial geographic distance from the location of the original action, may still be an indirect consequence that is substantial enough to be considered an impact.

160) For the reasons set out above, I was not satisfied that there is any relevant impact.

Conclusion

161) For the reasons given at paragraphs 124 to 159 above, I found that the information in the reconsideration request and the information provided in the department’s consultation on the request do not demonstrate that the proposed action will cause a net increase in global GHG emissions and global average temperature (and, therefore, the relevant physical effects of climate change on the world heritage values of declared World Heritage properties). The difficulty in estimating the likely contribution (if any) of the proposed action to the relevant physical effects of climate change on the world heritage values of declared World Heritage properties is one reason that I found that the proposed action is not a substantial cause of those effects.

162) Further, I found that, even if it could be shown that the emissions from the project would result in an increase in net global GHG emissions and global average temperature, the contribution of the proposed action would be very small. I concluded that the ‘substantial cause’ requirement for an indirect impact under section 527E(2) of the EPBC Act is not satisfied.

163) As such, I determined that the new information is not about the impacts the proposed action has, will have or is likely to have on the world heritage values of declared World Heritage Properties.

National Heritage values of National Heritage places (sections 15 and 15C)

Referral information

164) The original referral decision does not include this controlling provision because the proposed action does not occur within or adjacent to any National Heritage places. I considered it unlikely the proposed action would have a significant impact on National Heritage places given the nature and scale of the proposed action, its potential impacts, and its distance from National Heritage places.

165) I note that the delegate did not consider climate-related evidence in relation to this protected matter at the time of the referral decision on 18 November 2016. As noted above, no consideration was given to potential climate change flow-on effects of greenhouse gas emissions, or greenhouse gas emissions, as impacts on protected matters from the proposed action.

Substantial new information about the impacts of the proposed action

166) EJA identified over 230 documents that it considers demonstrate the likely significant effects of climate change on matters protected under this controlling provision. These publicly available documents include information in the Australian Heritage database and management plans for National Heritage places.

167) I considered that this information is substantial new information as:

- a) much of the information contained in the reconsideration request was not before the delegate and so is considered new information; and
- b) the information is of substance and is not trivial or inconsequential, and demonstrates that climate change has various effects on this protected matter.

168) The information in the reconsideration request related to 19 National Heritage places:

- a) Australian Alps National Parks and Reserves
- b) Dampier Archipelago
- c) Elizabeth Springs
- d) Glass House Mountains National Landscape
- e) Grampians Greater Gariwerd National Park
- f) Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park
- g) Kurnell Peninsula Headland
- h) Lesueur National Park
- i) Porongurup National Park
- j) Recherche Bay (NE Peninsula) Area
- k) Stirling Range National Park

- l) Warrumbungle National Park
- m) Witjira-Dalhousie Springs National Park
- n) K'gari (Fraser Island)
- o) Great Barrier Reef
- p) Greater Blue Mountains
- q) Macquarie Island
- r) Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park
- s) Wet Tropics of Queensland.

169) The last six places listed above are also declared World Heritage properties. In respect of those six places EJA relied on the information it provided for the World Heritage properties. The discussion below therefore relates to the information EJA provided in relation to the 13 National Heritage places that are not also World Heritage properties.

170) Broadly, the information presented by EJA about the effects of climate change on National Heritage places showed there are effects on biodiversity in these places due to changing population size and distribution of species, the modification of species composition, and alteration of the geographical extent of habitats and ecosystems. Climate change is likely to exacerbate many existing threats to the ecological integrity of National Heritage places such as:

- a) Decreasing and changing water flows
- a) Fire weather
- b) Invasive species
- c) Habitat fragmentation and the loss of key habitat such as hollow bearing trees.

Does the information relate to the impacts that the proposed action has or will have, or is likely to have, on the National Heritage values of a National Heritage place

171) The information in the reconsideration request identified that climate change is having or will have adverse effects on the flora, fauna and ecosystems of the identified National Heritage places. This will in turn have adverse effects on the National Heritage values of those places.

172) For the same reasons as those set out at paragraphs 135 to 137 above in relation to the World Heritage values of declared World Heritage properties, having regard to the information provided by EJA and through the section 78B consultation process, flow-on climate change effects would be indirect consequences of the proposed action on the National Heritage values of the identified National Heritage places for the purposes of the EPBC Act.

173) For the same reasons as those set out at paragraphs 138 to 163 above in relation to the World Heritage values of declared World Heritage properties, I found that the proposed action is not a

substantial cause of the stated physical effects of climate change on the National Heritage values of the identified National Heritage places.

Conclusion

174) I found that the new information is not about the impacts the proposed action has, will have or is likely to have on National Heritage places.

Ecological character of declared Ramsar wetlands (sections 16 and 17B)

Referral information

175) The original referral decision does not include this controlling provision because the proposed action does not occur within or adjacent to any Ramsar listed wetland of international importance. I considered it unlikely that the proposed action would have a significant impact on the ecological character of a declared Ramsar wetland given the nature and scale of the proposed action, its potential impacts, and its distance to Ramsar listed wetlands of international importance.

176) I note that the delegate did not consider climate-related evidence in relation to this protected matter at the time of the referral decision on 18 November 2016. As noted above, no consideration was given to potential climate change flow-on effects of greenhouse gas emissions, or greenhouse gas emissions, as impacts on protected matters from the proposed action.

Substantial new information about the impacts of the proposed action

177) EJA has identified over 50 documents that it considers demonstrate the likely significant impacts of climate change on matters protected under this controlling provision. These publicly available documents include the ecological character descriptions for Ramsar sites.

178) I considered that this information is substantial new information as:

- a) much of the information contained in the reconsideration request was not before me and so is considered new information; and
- b) the information is of substance and is not trivial or inconsequential, and demonstrates that climate change has various effects on this protected matter.

179) The information in the reconsideration request identified 51 of Australia's 53 Ramsar wetlands as likely to be affected by climate change. The effects of climate change identified in the information relate predominately to changes associated with altered water balance, including:

- a) Rising sea levels that increase the incursion of salt water into estuary waters and freshwater wetland habitat, affecting the freshwater biota within the wetlands.
- b) The increased intensity of tidal storm surges, increasing foreshore shoreline erosion and inundation processes.
- c) Altered rainfall patterns, affecting water quality, ground water recharge and vegetation.
- d) Longer drier periods, increasing evaporation which affect salinity and groundwater levels.

Does the information relate to the impacts that the proposed action has or will have, or is likely to have, on the ecological character of declared Ramsar wetlands?

180) The ecological character of a Ramsar wetland is the combination of the ecosystem components, processes and benefits/services that characterise the wetland at a given point in time. I accepted the department's advice that the information in the reconsideration request identified that climate change is altering the water balance of Ramsar wetlands which, in turn, is having adverse effects on the ecological character of declared Ramsar wetlands.

181) For the same reasons as those set out at paragraphs 135 to 137 above in relation to the world heritage values of declared World Heritage properties, having regard to the information provided by EJA and through the section 78B consultation process, I found that flow-on climate change effects are indirect consequences of the proposed action on the ecological character of declared Ramsar wetlands for the purposes of the EPBC Act.

182) For the same reasons as those set out at paragraphs 138 to 163 above in relation to the world heritage values of declared World Heritage properties, I found that the proposed action is not a substantial cause of the stated physical effects of climate change on the ecological character of declared Ramsar wetlands.

Conclusion

183) I found that the new information is not about the impacts the proposed action has, will have or is likely to have on the ecological character of Ramsar wetlands.

Listed threatened species and ecological communities (sections 18 and 18A)

Referral information

184) I noted that the original referral decision includes controlling provisions under sections 18 and 18A because I considered it likely the proposed action would result in significant impacts to habitat for listed threatened species and ecological communities from vegetation clearance and habitat degradation, changes to hydrological regimes and impacts to water quality.

185) I note that the delegate did not consider climate-related evidence in relation to this protected matter at the time of the referral decision on 18 November 2016. As noted above, no consideration was given to potential climate change flow-on effects of greenhouse gas emissions, or greenhouse gas emissions, as impacts on protected matters from the proposed action.

Substantial new information about the impacts of the proposed action

186) EJA has identified over 2,000 documents that it considers demonstrate the likely significant impacts of climate change on matters protected under these controlling provisions. These publicly available documents include conservation advices and listing advices for individual species and the IUCN Red List assessments. EJA divided its information for these provisions into three groups – listed fauna, listed flora and listed ecological communities. The department's analysis of this information, which I have adopted below, was grouped in the same way.

187) I considered this information is substantial new information as:

- a) some of the information contained in the reconsideration request was not before me and so is considered new information; and

- b) the information is of substance and is not trivial or inconsequential, and demonstrates that climate change has various effects on this protected

Listed threatened fauna

188) EJA considers that 366 listed faunal species are likely to be affected by climate change. The information in the reconsideration request identified that climate change is likely to increase the frequency and severity of droughts, floods, and bushfire due to increased temperature and altered rainfall patterns. These weather events will affect the availability and distribution of breeding and foraging habitats for listed faunal species. For example, reduced waterflows can result in the loss of streamside vegetation and floods and bushfires impact on the water quality of aquatic environments. The effects of climate change are more pronounced for fauna with restricted area of occupancy and low-density populations at those sites.

189) The information in the reconsideration request also identified other sources of physical pressures on listed faunal species such as water extraction, feral predation, feral herbivores, introduced pests and developments (e.g. roads and agriculture).

Listed threatened flora

190) EJA considers that 1,048 listed floral species are likely to be affected by climate change. The information in the reconsideration request identified that climate change will cause Australia's climate to get hotter and drier, resulting in the potential for increased drought and climate-induced bushfires of increased intensity and frequency. This change in climate will affect the habitat suitability of listed floral species – particularly those which occur in small, fragmented populations with specific habitat requirements (e.g. moisture content) or in a highly restricted geographic range (e.g. alpine regions). In addition, the effects of extreme rainfall flood events associated with climate change may affect listed floral species, for example, by leading to the erosion of swampy floodplain habitat and causing physical damage to listed flora.

191) The information in the reconsideration request also identified other pressures on listed floral species, such as habitat fragmentation, encroachment from developments, introduced pests and diseases, and human recreational activities (e.g. bushwalking, camping and abseiling).

Listed ecological communities

192) EJA considers that 74 listed threatened ecological communities are likely to be affected by climate change. The information in the reconsideration request identified that climate change poses a serious long-term threat to terrestrial, coastal, and aquatic ecosystems that are listed threatened ecological communities. Wetlands, swamps, moist open forest, and rainforests will be under greater stress from a drier climate. Coastal ecological communities will be impacted by rising sea levels.

193) The information in the reconsideration request also noted that climate change not only directly threatens the species within ecological communities that cannot adapt, but it is also likely to exacerbate existing threats including:

- a) Loss of habitat
- b) Altered hydrological regimes

- c) Altered fire regimes
- d) The spread of invasive species and disease
- e) Tree decline due to prolonged drought and heat stress
- f) Human activities

Does the information relate to the impacts that the proposed action has or will have, or is likely to have, national heritage

194) I accepted the department's advice that the information in the reconsideration request identified that climate change is having, or will have, adverse effects on the habitats of listed threatened species and the composition of listed threatened ecological communities.

195) For the same reasons as those set out at paragraphs 135 to 137 above in relation to the world heritage values of declared World Heritage properties, having regard to the information provided by EJA and through the section 78B consultation process, I found that flow-on climate change effects are indirect consequences of the proposed action on listed threatened species and ecological communities for the purposes of the EPBC Act.

196) For the same reasons as those set out at paragraphs 138 to 163 above in relation to the world heritage values of declared World Heritage properties, I found that the proposed action is not a substantial cause of the stated physical effects of climate change on listed threatened species and ecological communities.

Conclusion

197) I found that the new information is not about the impacts the proposed action has, will have or is likely to have on listed threatened species and ecological communities.

198) I noted the department's advice that, because the original referral decision specified sections 18 and 18A as controlling provisions, impacts on listed threatened species and ecological communities will be assessed for the purposes of the decision whether or not to approve the proposed action. The further information provided by EJA would not warrant the revocation and substitution of the original decision in relation to the identified controlling provisions, including the controlling provisions under sections 18 and 18A.

Listed migratory species (sections 20 and 20A)

Referral information

199) I noted that the original referral decision for the proposed action includes this controlling provision because I considered it likely the proposed action would result in a significant impact to listed migratory species from vegetation clearance, subsidence impacts and disruption to wetland systems.

200) I note that the delegate did not consider climate-related evidence in relation to this protected matter at the time of the referral decision on 18 November 2016. As noted above, no consideration was given to potential climate change flow-on effects of greenhouse gas emissions, or greenhouse gas emissions, as impacts on protected matters from the proposed action.

Substantial new information about the impacts of the proposed action

201) EJA has identified over 150 documents and information that it considers demonstrate the likely significant impacts of climate change on matters protected under this controlling provision. This publicly available material includes information about individual species from the department's SPRAT and conservation and listing advices.

202) I considered this information is substantial new information as:

- a) some of the information contained in the reconsideration request was not before me and so is considered new information; and
- b) the information is of substance and is not trivial or inconsequential, and demonstrates that climate change has various effects on this protected matter.

203) EJA considers 133 listed migratory species are likely to be impacted by climate change. The information in the reconsideration request identifies relationships between climate change and listed migratory species, for example:

- a) Migratory waders – global warming and associated changes in sea level are likely to have long-term effects on breeding, staging, and non-breeding grounds.
- b) Cold water marine mammals – increasing ocean temperatures predicted by climate change scenarios could potentially decrease the extent of their occurrence with warmer water extending southwards
- c) Marine turtles – changing temperatures and weather patterns associated with climate change are likely to have both direct physiological effects on marine turtles as well as indirect effects through impacts on critical habitats.

Does the information relate to the impacts that the proposed action has or will have, or is likely to have, on listed migratory species?

204) I accepted the department's advice that the information in the reconsideration request identified that climate change is having, or will have, adverse effects on migratory species.

205) For the same reasons as those set out at paragraphs 135 to 137 above in relation to the world heritage values of declared World Heritage properties, having regard to the information provided by EJA and through the section 78B consultation process, I found that flow-on climate change effects are indirect consequences of the proposed action on listed migratory species for the purposes of the EPBC Act.

206) For the same reasons as those set out at paragraphs 138 to 163 above in relation to the world heritage values of declared World Heritage properties, I found that the proposed action is not a substantial cause of the stated physical effects of climate change on listed migratory species.

Conclusion

207) I found that the new information is not about the impacts the proposed action has, will have or is likely to have on listed migratory species.

208) I noted the department's advice that, because the original referral decision specified sections 20 and 20A as controlling provisions, impacts on listed migratory species will be assessed for the purposes of the decision whether or not to approve the proposed action. The further information provided by EJA would not warrant the revocation and substitution of the original decision in relation to the identified controlling provisions, including the controlling provisions under sections 20 and 20A.

Environment in a Commonwealth marine area (sections 23 and 24A)

Referral information

209) The original referral decision does not include this controlling provision because the proposed action does not occur in a Commonwealth marine area (CMA). Based on the information provided in the referral I considered that the proposed action was unlikely to have a significant impact on the environment in a CMA.

210) I note that the delegate did not consider climate-related evidence in relation to this protected matter at the time of the referral decision on 18 November 2016. As noted above, no consideration was given to potential climate change flow-on effects of greenhouse gas emissions, or greenhouse gas emissions, as impacts on protected matters from the proposed action.

Substantial new information about the impacts of the proposed action

211) EJA has identified over 540 documents that it considers demonstrate the likely significant impacts of climate change on the matter protected under this controlling provision. These publicly available materials include bioregional plans, species group and marine environment report cards and region profiles.

- a) I considered that this information is substantial new information as: much of the information contained in the reconsideration request was not before me and so is considered new information; and
- b) the information is of substance and is not trivial or inconsequential, and demonstrates that climate change has various effects on this protected matter.

212) EJA considers that the environment in five of the six CMAs and over 390 listed marine species are likely to be impacted by climate change.

213) The information in the reconsideration request identifies the relationships between climate change related events and the environment in CMAs, for example:

- a) Increased frequency of storms – may cause habitat modification by altering coastal landscapes, particularly sandy beaches and low-lying islands, resulting in changes to the structure, function, and capacity of coastal ecosystems to deliver ecosystem function.
- b) Sea level rise – may have consequences when combined with increasing cyclone frequency, particularly for habitats associated with inshore dolphins and some breeding seabirds.
- c) Ocean acidification – may have physiological effects on many species and may also cause changes to the composition of ecological community structures dependent on hard

substrate environments, which may in turn impact on food sources for higher trophic level species.

214) The information in the reconsideration request identifies that one third of reef building corals face an elevated extinction risk from climate change, and that climate change may thus threaten all sea snakes, which are coral reef specialists. The information in the reconsideration request also indicates that climate change, and associated changes in sea level, are likely to have a long-term impact on the breeding, staging, and non-breeding grounds of migratory shorebirds. In general, species that inhabit low-lying areas (e.g. beaches and atolls) will be subject to inundation and loss of habitat, and species that are geographically bounded will be impacted by rising temperatures

Does the information relate to the impacts that the proposed action has or will have, or is likely to have, national heritage

215) I accepted the department's advice that the information in the reconsideration request identified that climate change is, or will have, adverse effects on the environment in a CMA, in particular ecosystems and their constituent parts which in turn impact on the qualities and characteristics of locations and places within a CMA.

216) For the same reasons as those set out at paragraphs 135 to 137 above in relation to the world heritage values of declared World Heritage properties, having regard to the information provided by EJA and through the section 78B consultation process, I found that flow-on climate change effects are indirect consequences of the proposed action on the environment in a CMA for the purposes of the EPBC Act.

217) For the same reasons as those set out at paragraphs 138 to 163 above in relation to the world heritage values of declared World Heritage properties, I found that the proposed action is not a substantial cause of the stated physical effects of climate change on the environment in a CMA.

Conclusion

218) I found that the new information is not about the impacts the proposed action has, will have or is likely to have on the environment in a CMA.

Environment in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (sections 24B and 24C)

Referral information

219) The original referral decision does not include this controlling provision because the proposed action is not being undertaken in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (**the Park**). Based on the information contained in the referral documentation, the nature and scale of the proposed action and its potential impacts, and the distance to the Park, I considered that the proposed action was unlikely to have a significant impact on the Park.

220) I note that the delegate did not consider climate-related evidence in relation to this protected matter at the time of the referral decision on 18 November 2016. As noted above, no consideration was given to potential climate change flow-on effects of greenhouse gas emissions, or greenhouse gas emissions, as impacts on protected matters from the proposed action.

Substantial new information about the impacts of the proposed action

221) EJA has identified over 13 documents and information that it considers demonstrate the likely significant impacts of climate change on matters protected under this controlling provision. These publicly available materials include bioregional plans, species group and marine environment report cards and region profiles. The information provided for this controlling provision was the same information as provided for the Park under the World Heritage controlling provision.

222) I considered that this information is substantial new information as:

- a) much of the information contained in the reconsideration request was not before me and so is considered new information; and
- b) the information is of substance and is not trivial or inconsequential, and demonstrates that climate change has various effects on this protected matter.

223) The information in the reconsideration request identified that climate change is the most serious threat to the environment in the Park and compounds the impacts of other existing threats such as land-based run off, coastal development, and direct use (particularly fishing).

224) For example, climate change reduces the Park's resilience, with thermal extremes causing mass mortality of adult coral and a decline in coral recruitment, as well as mass mortality of fish and invertebrates, in shallow northern reef lagoons in 2016. Small changes in sea levels also increase erosion, which has effects on turtle and seabird nesting beaches and causes land inundation, affecting tidal habitats (e.g. brackish saltmarsh habitats are being displaced by mangroves).

Does the information relate to the impacts that the proposed action has or will have, or is likely to have, national heritage

225) I accepted the department's advice that the information in the reconsideration request identified that climate change is having, or will have, adverse effects on the environment in the Park, in particular its ecosystems and constituent parts, which can in turn impact on the qualities and characteristics of locations and places with the Park and its heritage values.

226) For the same reasons as those set out at paragraphs 135 to 137 above in relation to the world heritage values of declared World Heritage properties, having regard to the information provided by EJA and through the section 78B consultation process, I found that flow-on climate change effects are indirect consequences of the proposed action on the environment of the Park for the purposes of the EPBC Act.

227) For the same reasons as those set out at paragraphs 138 to 163 above in relation to the world heritage values of declared World Heritage properties, I found that the proposed action is not a substantial cause of the stated physical effects of climate change on the environment in the Park.

Conclusion

228) I found that the new information is not about the impacts the proposed action has, will have or is likely to have on the environment in the Park.

Precautionary principle

229) As a request has been made pursuant to section 78A of the EPBC Act, I accepted the department's advice that I was required to reconsider the decision under section 75 (about whether an action is a controlled action and which provisions of Part 3 (if any) are controlling provisions for the action). As noted above, in making a decision under section 75, I am required to take account of the precautionary principle (section 391) to the extent that I can do so consistently with the other provisions of the EPBC Act. The precautionary principle is that a lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing a measure to prevent degradation of the environment where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage. I noted that the precautionary principle was taken into account in the original referral decision.

230) In making my decision to confirm the referral decision, I took into account the precautionary principle. I considered that, while the information in the reconsideration request demonstrates that there is a risk of serious or irreversible harm arising from climate change, for the reasons I have explained above, the GHG emissions from the proposed action do not cause 'impacts' on protected matters. I was therefore not satisfied that the revocation and substitution of the original referral decision was warranted by substantial new information about the impacts of the proposed action

Conclusion

231) In light of the findings described at paragraphs 121 to 230 above, I was not satisfied that the revocation and substitution of the original referral decision was warranted by the availability of substantial new information about the impacts that the action has or will have, or is likely to have, on protected matters.

232) As discussed above at paragraph 123, I also considered whether any of the grounds at sections 78(1)(aa) to (d) may be the basis for a decision to reconsider the original referral decision, but found that they would not be.

233) Therefore, I decided to confirm the original decision that the proposed action is a controlled action and that the controlling provisions are sections 18 and 18A (listed threatened species and communities), sections 20 and 20A (listed migratory species) and sections 24D and 24E (a water resource, in relation to coal seam gas development and large coal mining development).

name and position

Mark Say
 Director, Renewables Regulatory Practice Section
 Environment Assessments Queensland
 Former acting Branch Head, Environment Assessments Queensland

signature



date of decision

8 October 2025

Annexure A – Relevant extracts from the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

78 Reconsideration of decision

Limited power to vary or substitute decisions

- (1) The Minister may revoke a decision (the **first decision**) made under subsection 75(1) about an action and substitute a new decision under that subsection for the first decision, but only if:
- (a) the Minister is satisfied that the revocation and substitution is warranted by the availability of substantial new information about the impacts that the action:
 - (i) has or will have; or
 - (ii) is likely to have;
 on a matter protected by a provision of Part 3; or
 - (aa) the Minister is satisfied that the revocation and substitution is warranted by a substantial change in circumstances that was not foreseen at the time of the first decision and relates to the impacts that the action:
 - (i) has or will have; or
 - (ii) is likely to have;
 on a matter protected by a provision of Part 3; or
 - (b) the following requirements are met:
 - (i) the first decision was that the action was not a controlled action because the Minister believed the action would be taken in the manner identified under subsection 77A(1) in the notice given under section 77;
 - (ii) the Minister is satisfied that the action is not being, or will not be, taken in the manner identified; or
 - (ba) the following requirements are met:
 - (i) the first decision was that the action was not a controlled action because of a provision of a bilateral agreement and a management arrangement or an authorisation process that is a bilaterally accredited management arrangement or a bilaterally accredited authorisation process for the purposes of the agreement;
 - (ii) the provision of the agreement no longer operates in relation to the action, or the management arrangement or authorisation process is no longer in force under, or set out in, a law of a State or a self-governing Territory identified in or under the agreement; or
 - (c) the following requirements are met:
 - (i) the first decision was that the action was not a controlled action because of a declaration under section 33 and a management arrangement or an authorisation process that is an accredited management arrangement or an accredited authorisation process for the purposes of the declaration;
 - (ii) the declaration no longer operates in relation to the action, or the management arrangement or authorisation process is no longer in operation under, or set out in, a law of the Commonwealth identified in or under the declaration; or
 - (ca) the following requirements are met:

- (i) the first decision was that the action was not a controlled action because of a declaration under section 37A and a bioregional plan to which the declaration relates;
- (ii) the declaration no longer operates in relation to the action, or the bioregional plan is no longer in force; or

(d) the Minister is requested under section 79 to reconsider the decision.

Note 1: Subsection 75(1) provides for decisions about whether an action is a controlled action and what the controlling provisions for the action are.

Note 2: A person (other than a Minister of a State or self-governing Territory) may request the Minister to reconsider a decision made under subsection 75(1) about an action on the basis of a matter referred to in any of paragraphs 78(1)(a) to (ca). See section 78A.

Note 3: If the Minister decides to revoke a decision under subsection (1) and substitute a new decision for it, the Minister is not required to carry out the processes referred to in sections 73 and 74 again before making the new decision.

Reversing decision that provision of Part 3 is not controlling provision

- (2) A provision of Part 3 letting an action be taken if the Minister has decided that a particular provision (the **prohibiting provision**) of that Part is not a controlling provision for the action does not prevent the Minister from acting under subsection (1) to revoke a decision that the prohibiting provision is not a controlling provision for an action and substitute a decision that the prohibiting provision is a controlling provision for the action.

Decision not to be revoked after approval granted or refused or action taken

- (3) The Minister must not revoke the first decision after:
 - (a) the Minister has granted or refused an approval of the taking of the action; or
 - (b) the action is taken.

General effect of change of decision

- (4) When the first decision is revoked and a new decision is substituted for it:
 - (a) any provisions of this Chapter that applied in relation to the action because of the first decision cease to apply in relation to the action; and
 - (b) any provisions of this Chapter that are relevant because of the new decision apply in relation to the action.

Change of designation of proponent

- (5) If the Minister believes a person (the **first proponent**) designated under section 75 as proponent of an action is no longer an appropriate person to be the designated proponent of the action, the Minister may revoke the designation and designate another person (the **later proponent**) as proponent of the action.

Consent to designation

- (6) The Minister may designate the other person as proponent of the action only if:
 - (a) he or she consents to it and the person proposing to take the action agrees to it; or

- (b) the other person is the person proposing to take the action.

Effect of change of designated proponent

- (7) If the Minister revokes the designation of the first proponent and designates the later proponent:
 - (a) the provisions of this Chapter that applied to the first proponent cease to apply to the first proponent in relation to the action but apply to the later proponent; and
 - (b) for the purposes of those provisions the later proponent is taken to have done anything the first proponent did in relation to the action; and
 - (c) for the purposes of those provisions anything done in relation to the first proponent in relation to the action is taken to have been done in relation to the later proponent.

78A Request for reconsideration of decision by person other than State or Territory Minister

- (1) A person (other than a Minister of a State or self-governing Territory) may request the Minister to reconsider a decision made under subsection 75(1) about an action on the basis of a matter referred to in any of paragraphs 78(1)(a) to (ca).

Note: Section 79 deals with requests for reconsideration by a Minister of a State or self-governing Territory.

- (2) A request under subsection (1) must:
 - (a) be in writing; and
 - (b) set out the basis on which the person thinks the decision should be reconsidered; and
 - (c) if the regulations specify other requirements for requests under subsection (1)—comply with those requirements.
- (3) If a request is made under subsection (1) in relation to a decision that an action is a controlled action, or that particular provisions are controlling provisions for an action, then:
 - (a) if the request is made by the designated proponent of the action—Part 8 ceases to apply in relation to the action until the Minister makes a decision in relation to the request; but
 - (b) if the request is made by another person—the application of Part 8 in relation to the action is not affected by the making of the request (subject to the outcome of the reconsideration).
- (4) If:
 - (a) because of paragraph (3)(a), Part 8 has ceased to apply in relation to an action; and
 - (b) the Minister confirms the decision that is the subject of the request under subsection (1);
 then:
 - (c) the application of Part 8 in relation to the action resumes (as does any assessment process under that Part that had previously commenced in relation to the action); and
 - (d) for the purposes of the resumed application of Part 8, a day is not to be counted as a business day if it is:

- (i) on or after the day the Minister received the request; and
- (ii) on or before the day the Minister confirms the decision.

78B Minister must inform interested persons of request and invite comments

- (1) The Minister (the **Environment Minister**) must comply with this section if he or she receives a request under section 78A to reconsider a decision made under subsection 75(1) about an action.

Informing designated proponent of request and inviting comments

- (2) If the request is made by a person other than the designated proponent of the action, the Environment Minister must:
- (a) inform the designated proponent of the request in accordance with subsection (3); and
 - (b) invite the designated proponent to give the Environment Minister, within 10 business days, comments on the request.
- (3) For the purpose of paragraph (2)(a), the Environment Minister must inform the designated proponent of the request by giving the designated proponent such information relating to the request as the Minister considers appropriate. The Minister need not (for example) reveal the identity of the person who made the request.

Inviting other Commonwealth Ministers to provide information

- (4) The Environment Minister must:
- (a) inform any other Minister who the Environment Minister believes has administrative responsibilities relating to the action of the request; and
 - (b) invite each Minister informed to give the Environment Minister, within 10 business days, information about whether a matter referred to in any of paragraphs 78(1)(a) to (ca) is applicable in relation to the action.

Inviting comments from appropriate State or Territory Minister

- (5) If the request relates to an action proposed to be taken in a State or self-governing Territory and the Environment Minister thinks the action may have an impact on a matter protected by a provision of Division 1 of Part 3 (about matters of national environmental significance), the Environment Minister must:
- (a) inform the appropriate Minister of the State or Territory of the request; and
 - (b) invite that Minister to give the Environment Minister, within 10 business days:
 - (i) comments on whether a matter referred to in any of paragraphs 78(1)(a) to (ca) is applicable in relation to the action; and
 - (ii) any other information that the Minister of the State or Territory considers relevant to the reconsideration.

Note: Subsection (5) also applies in relation to a request that relates to an action that is to be taken in an area offshore from a State or the Northern Territory. See section 157.

Inviting public comment

- (6) The Environment Minister must publish on the internet:
- (a) the request; and

- (b) an invitation for anyone to give the Environment Minister, within 10 business days (measured in Canberra), comments in writing on whether a matter referred to in any of paragraphs 78(1)(a) to (ca) is applicable in relation to the action.

78C Minister must reconsider decision and give notice of outcome

Reconsideration of decision

- (1) As soon as practicable after the end of the time within which information or comments may be given under section 78B in relation to a request under section 78A to reconsider a decision about an action, the Minister must:
 - (a) reconsider the decision; and
 - (b) either:
 - (i) confirm the decision; or
 - (ii) revoke the decision in accordance with subsection 78(1), and substitute a new decision for it.

Notice of outcome of reconsideration

- (2) The Minister must give written notice of the outcome of the reconsideration to:
 - (a) the person who requested the reconsideration; and
 - (b) the person proposing to take the action (if that person is not the person referred to in paragraph (a)); and
 - (c) the designated proponent of the action (if the designated proponent is not the person referred to in paragraph (a) or (b)); and
 - (d) if the reconsideration relates to an action referred to in subsection 78B(5)—the appropriate Minister of the State or Territory.
- (3) After giving notice as described in subsection (2), the Minister must publish notice of the outcome of the reconsideration. The regulations may specify how the publication is to be made. Subject to any such regulations, the publication must be made in a way the Minister considers appropriate.

Reasons for outcome of reconsideration

- (4) The Minister must give reasons for the outcome of the reconsideration to a person who:
 - (a) has been given notice of the outcome of the reconsideration under paragraph (2)(a), (b) or (c); and
 - (b) within 28 days after being given the notice, has requested the Minister to provide reasons.

The Minister must do so as soon as practicable, and in any case within 28 days after receiving the request.