



ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AUTHORITY



Your Ref: MP 09_0202
Our reference: Doc12/508
Contact: Gary Davey, 02 6651 5946

Mr David Kitto
Director, Major Project Assessment
Department of Planning and Infrastructure
GPO Box 39
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Dear Mr Kitto, *David*

Warkworth Extension Project Revised Offset Package

I refer to the above project and ongoing discussions regarding appropriate biodiversity offsets.

The EPA notes that the Department of Planning and Infrastructure granted draft project approval for the Warkworth Extension Project (application number MP 09_0202) on 14 September 2011. Condition 32 of the approval requires the proponent, Rio Tinto Coal Australia (RTCA), to deliver an additional offset area of 750 ha of existing remnant woodland vegetation as part of the Biodiversity Offset Strategy. In addition, consent condition 33 requires that the "additional offset area should be directed towards the conservation and enhancement of vegetation for the Central Hunter Grey Box-Ironbark Woodland and Central Hunter Ironbark-Spotted Gum-Grey Box Forest EECs".

To meet this requirement, RTCA has revised its statement of commitment to include the three properties of Bowditch (extension to original parcel), Towell and Roscommon. Details relating to the woody vegetation cover are summarised in Attachment A.

The EPA has conducted a desktop review of the vegetation on the properties using Spot5 imagery. These three parcels are estimated to have a net area of 761 ha of woodland vegetation cover, most of which is either Narrow-leaved Ironbark Woodland or White Box Woodland (the latter is listed as an endangered ecological community under the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* and the *Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*). These community types do not directly match those recommended under consent condition 33. However, given the fragmented occurrence of those types on the valley floor it is recommended that the woodland communities offer an acceptable offset solution.

Therefore, the area of native woodland vegetation in these three additional land parcels appears to meet the criterion of having at least 750 ha of woodland vegetation in the additional offset area as required by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure. The EPA therefore considers that the revised offset package meets the requirements of draft condition 32 and the intent of condition 33.

Yours sincerely

GARY DAVEY
Director North East
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ATTACHMENT A

Land Parcel	Gross Area (ha)	Estimated % of Vegetation Cover	Net Area of Vegetation Cover (ha)
Roscommon	1461.0	35%	511
Towell	417.3	40%	167
Bowditch Extension	87.2	95%	83
TOTAL	1965.5	-	761