

7 January 2026

Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
Attention: Stephen O'Donoghue, Director Resource Assessments
4 Parramatta Square
12 Darcy Street
Parramatta NSW 2150

Via email: stephen.odonoghue@planning.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr O'Donoghue,

RE: GUNNEDAH OPEN CUT OPERATIONS: VICKERY EXTENSION PROJECT (SSD 7480) AND TARRAWONGA COAL MINE (11_0047) – COAL HAULAGE MODIFICATIONS (MOD 3 & MOD 12) – SCOPING LETTER

Introduction

Whitehaven Coal Limited (Whitehaven) owns the following open cut coal mining operations located in the Gunnedah Coalfield, New South Wales (NSW) (Figure 1):

- Tarrawonga Coal Project (referred to as the Tarrawonga Coal Mine [TCM]) (Project Approval [11_0047]) (as modified) – approved under Part 3A of the NSW *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act) on 22 January 2013; and
- Vickery Extension Project (VEP) (Development Consent [SSD 7480]) (as modified) – approved under Part 4 of the EP&A Act on 12 August 2020.

On 8 October 2025, a delegate of the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces modified Project Approval 11_0047 and SSD 7480 to temporarily increase the maximum run-of-mine (ROM) coal road haulage limit from 3.5 million tonnes per annum (Mtpa) to 3.8 Mtpa during calendar year 2025. The maximum ROM coal road haulage limit in these approvals will revert to 3.5 Mtpa from end of financial year 2026, without the construction of the Kamilaroi Highway Overpass.

Whitehaven has identified an opportunity to utilise existing infrastructure and ROM coal haulage fleet at its Whitehaven coal handling and preparation plant (CHPP), TCM, and VEP to achieve a ROM coal production rate of up to 4.1 Mtpa for calendar years 2026-30 inclusive. The current ROM coal road haulage limits specified in the TCM and VEP approvals were originally introduced as part of the conditioning of the Vickery Coal Project and Tarrawonga Coal Project (and subsequent TCM Mod 1). Since these approvals, Whitehaven has adopted higher payload trucks meaning it is capable of hauling 4.1 Mtpa of ROM coal from TCM and VEP while maintaining daily and hourly trips below those previously assessed.

Whitehaven is seeking approval under section 4.55(2) of the EP&A Act to increase the cumulative ROM coal road haulage limit along the southern section of the Approved ROM Coal Transport Route from 3.5 Mtpa to 4.1 Mtpa for the calendar year period 2026 to 31 December 2030 without constructing the Kamilaroi Highway Overpass (Figure 1).

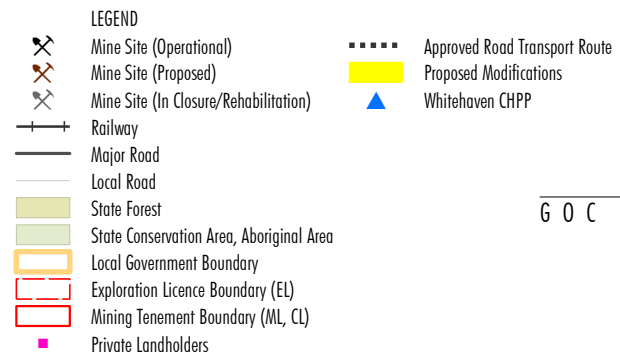
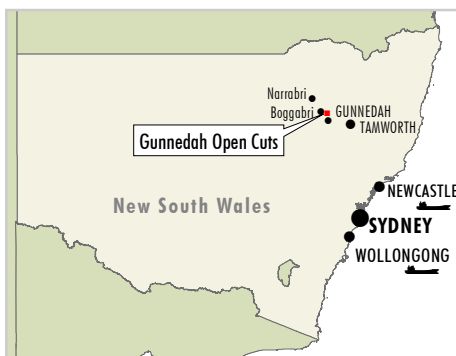
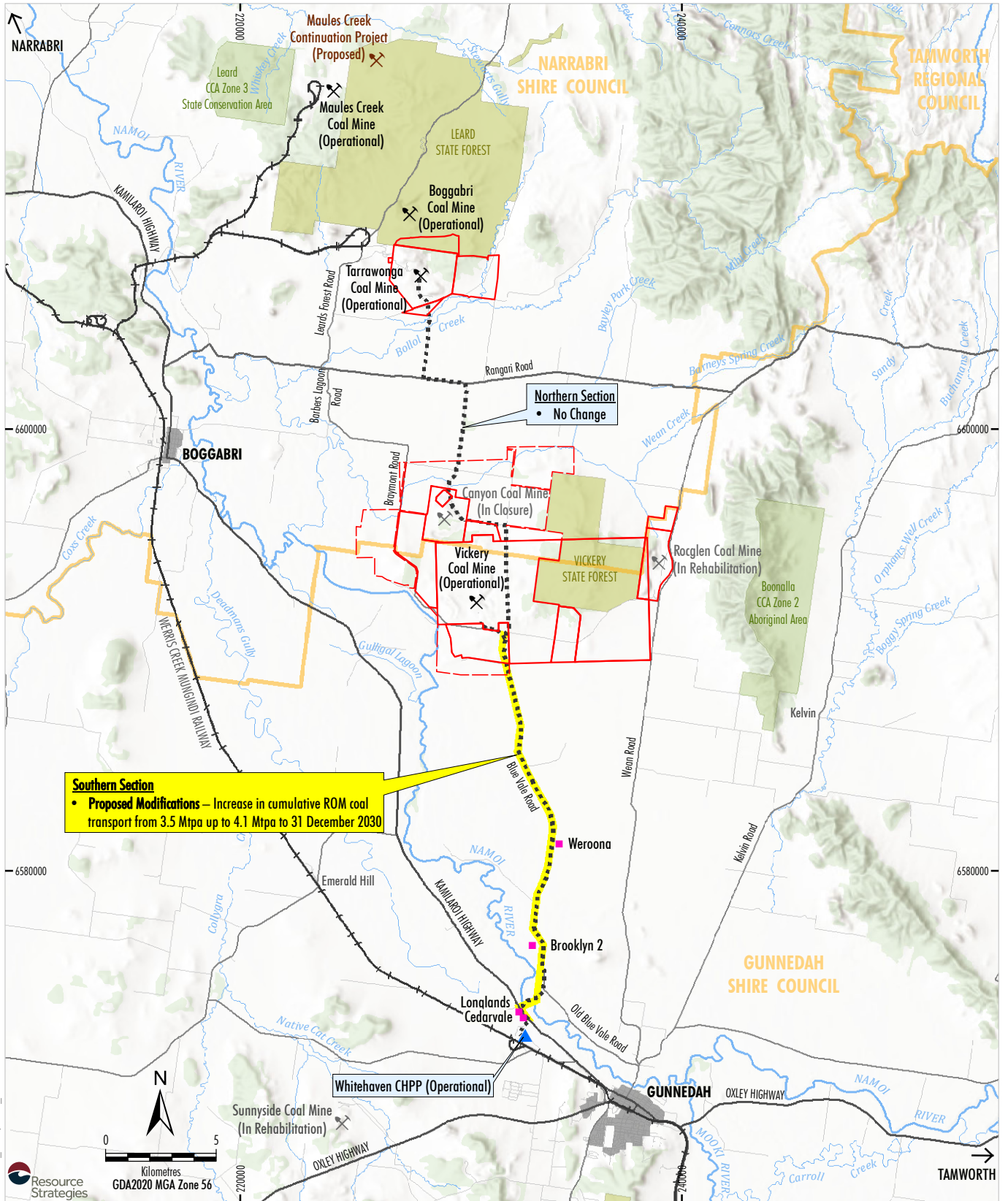
The proposed ROM coal road haulage limit would align with the maximum approved ROM coal processing limit of 4.1 Mtpa at the Whitehaven CHPP (DA 0079-2002 [as modified]). Additionally, the Modifications would be aligned with the consented life for TCM and Whitehaven CHPP (i.e. 31 December 2030).

The purpose of this Scoping Letter is to provide an overview of the Modifications, identify the matters that will require further assessment (including the proposed approach to assessment) and planned engagement that will be carried out during the preparation of the Modification Report. The Modification Report would be prepared in accordance with the State Significant Development Guidelines (DPHI, 2024a), in particular the *State significant development guidelines - preparing a modification report* (DPE, 2022c).

This Scoping Letter seeks confirmation from the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) of the approval pathway, assessment scope and consultation requirements for the Modifications.

Strategic Context

Whitehaven commenced mining operations at the VEP under SSD 7480 in October 2023. Since then, existing Whitehaven mobile mining fleet have been transferred from the TCM to the VEP to increase ROM coal production at the VEP. Since establishing the box cut at the VEP, the production rate has continued to increase as ROM coal can be accessed at a lower strip ratio than at the TCM. With the improved mining efficiency, the capacity of the mobile mining fleet is able to support a cumulative ROM coal production from the VEP and TCM of 4.1 Mtpa in 2026.



Whitehaven
GOC MODIFICATIONS
Proposed Modifications

Figure 1

Following the ramp up of early mining of Vickery that occurred in FY25, Whitehaven is taking advantage of current infrastructure available for the Gunnedah Open Cut operations ahead of a major capital expenditure commitment. The timing for progressing full scale development plans and further capital expenditure will reflect competing opportunities for capital across the Whitehaven business, as well as coal and capital market conditions.

The Whitehaven CHPP is approved to operate until 31 December 2030 and process up to a maximum of 4.1 Mtpa of ROM coal from the Gunnedah Open Cut (GOC) operations. The Modifications would enable the opportunity to maximise processing within the approved capacity of the Whitehaven CHPP without any changes to current processing infrastructure.

The alignment of the increased ROM coal road haulage to the currently approved life of both TCM and the Whitehaven CHPP allows for greater flexibility in scheduling haulage volumes while remaining within the approved limits of the Whitehaven CHPP.

The current ROM coal road haulage limits specified in the TCM and VEP approvals were originally introduced as part of the conditioning of the Vickery Coal Project and Tarrawonga Coal Project (and subsequent TCM Mod 1). Since these approvals, Whitehaven has adopted higher payload trucks meaning it is capable of hauling 4.1 Mtpa of ROM coal from TCM and VEP while maintaining daily and hourly trips below those previously assessed.

Whitehaven has engaged with Idemitsu Boggabri Coal under the Condition 10, Schedule 2 of TCM Project Approval 11_0047 and is unable to reach an agreement regarding use of Boggabri Coal Mine infrastructure. The maximum ROM coal road haulage limit in these approvals will revert to 3.5 Mtpa from end of financial year 2026, without the construction of the Kamilaroi Highway Overpass.

Description of the Modifications

The Modifications would involve transport of an additional 0.6 Mtpa of ROM coal along the southern section of the Approved ROM Coal Transport Route (cumulatively a total of 4.1 Mtpa ROM coal) to the Whitehaven CHPP for calendar years 2026 to end 2030. Whitehaven seeks to modify Condition 7, Schedule 2 of Project Approval 11_0047 and Condition A12 of Development Consent [SSD 7480]).

The Modifications would include no change to the following components of the GOC operations:

- Daily and hourly ROM road haulage trips on the Approved ROM Coal Transport Route,
- Mining operations at the approved GOC operations.
- Surface disturbance at the approved GOC operations or Whitehaven CHPP (e.g. to facilitate transport or stockpiling of ROM coal, product coal or coal rejects).
- Mine life(s), employment numbers, mining activities or other surface activities associated with the approved GOC operations or Whitehaven CHPP.
- Approved haulage hours.
- ROM coal transport route(s) from the GOC operations to the Whitehaven CHPP or existing domestic customers.
- Coal reject transport route(s) from the Whitehaven CHPP to VCM or TCM for incorporation into the final landforms.

Attachment A provides a summary comparing the currently approved GOC operations and the GOC operations incorporating the proposed Modifications.

Statutory Context

The Modifications are proposed to be sought under section 4.55(2) of the EP&A Act, on the basis that Whitehaven considers the Modification would be 'substantially the same' as the approved GOC operations. It is anticipated that the Modification applications and Modification Report would be lodged in the first quarter of calendar year 2026.

Whitehaven does not propose to refer the Modifications under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, given that the Modifications are not expected to have any impacts on Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES).

Proposed Assessment of Impacts

A single Modification Report which assesses the changes required to the TCM Project Approval (11_0047) and the VEP Development Consent (SSD 7480), would be prepared as part of a combined assessment approach as prepared for RCM MOD 5, TCM MOD 11 and VEP MOD 2. The Modification Report would clearly delineate between the Modifications components and associated assessments undertaken as relevant to each associated development consent/project approval.

The proposed scope of the environmental assessment of the Modification Report would include the following technical studies:

Road Traffic and Transport

A Road Traffic Assessment would be prepared to assess heavy vehicle movements associated with the proposed haulage volume increase. This would be conducted for the southern section of the Approved ROM Coal Transport Route within the approved ROM coal haulage hours. It is anticipated that average daily truck movements would be consistent with recent assessments under the temporary increase to 3.8 Mtpa for TCM MOD 11 and VEP MOD 2 (i.e. no expected change in affectation and no proposed changes to haulage hours or hours of operation).

Whitehaven would also review road safety and maintenance measures under the Modifications.

Road Noise

A Road Noise Assessment would be prepared to assess any changes in heavy vehicle movements associated with the proposed haulage volume along the southern section of the Approved ROM Coal Transport Route within the approved ROM coal haulage hours.

Other Environmental Aspects

Consideration and assessment of other environmental aspects (e.g. greenhouse gas) would be included in the main text of the Modification Report.

Whitehaven would also consider the potential impacts of the Modifications on the locality including potential climate change impacts.

Engagement

Whitehaven will consult with relevant NSW Government agencies and local councils during the preparation of the Modification Report in consideration of the *Undertaking Engagement Guidelines for State Significant Projects* (DPHI, 2024). Consultation will include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following government agencies and stakeholders during the preparation of the Modifications:

- DPHI;
- NSW Environment Protection Authority;
- NSW Department of Climate Change Energy the Environment and Water;
- NSW Resources Regulator;
- Gunnedah Shire Council;
- Narrabri Shire Council;
- TCM and VEP Community Consultative Committees; and
- Potentially affected local landholders on the Approved ROM Coal Transport Route.

The Modification Report will address the key issues raised in consultation with these stakeholders.

Next Steps

Whitehaven is seeking confirmation of the following items from DPHI:

- That the Modifications can be lodged and considered by DPHI under section 4.55(2) of the EP&A Act.
- The proposed scope of the Modifications is suitable.
- The proposed consultation for the Modifications is suitable.

Please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned if you have any queries or would like to discuss.

Yours sincerely



Tony Dwyer

General Manager - Approvals

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ATTACHMENT A

SUMMARY OF THE APPROVED AND MODIFIED GOC OPERATIONS

**Table A1-1
Comparison of the Previously Approved, Existing/Approved and Modified GOC Operations**

Project Component	Approved Gunnedah Open Cut Operations	Modified Gunnedah Open Cut Operations
Tarrawonga Coal Project (Project Approval [11_0047])		
Coal Handling, Processing and Transport Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Use of the Approved ROM Coal Transport Route to haul run-of-mine (ROM) coal from the Tarrawonga Coal Mine (TCM) to the Whitehaven Coal Handling and Preparation Plant (CHPP) until the Vickery Extension Project (VEP) CHPP, train load-out facility and rail spur infrastructure reach full operational capacity. – ROM coal processing would then transition to the VEP CHPP, prior to being loaded onto trains for transport to market. – Together with the owners of the Rocglen and Vickery Coal Mines ensure cumulative haulage of coal along the Approved ROM Coal Transport Route does not exceed 3.8 million tonnes (Mt) (for calendar year 2025) otherwise, 3.5 Mt each calendar year prior to commissioning of the Kamilaroi Highway Overpass. – For the period following the commissioning of the Kamilaroi Highway overpass, shall, together with the owners of the Vickery and Rocglen coal mines, ensure that the cumulative haulage of coal along the Approved ROM Coal Transport Route does not exceed 4.5 million tonnes per annum (Mtpa). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Increase in cumulative haulage of ROM coal along the southern section of the Approved ROM Coal Transport Route up to 4.1 Mtpa for calendar years 2026 to end 2030 without construction of the Kamilaroi Highway overpass.
Other Project Components	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – As described in documents listed in the Definitions section of Project Approval (11_0047). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – No change.
Vickery Extension Project (Development Consent [SSD 7480])		
Coal Handling, Processing and Transport Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Use of the Approved ROM Coal Transport Route to haul ROM coal from the VEP to the Whitehaven CHPP until the Project CHPP, train load-out facility and rail spur infrastructure reach full operational capacity. – Ability to receive ROM coal via road from other Whitehaven mining operations for stockpiling and/or processing at the VEP CHPP. – Together with the owners of the Tarrawonga and Rocglen Coal Mines ensure cumulative haulage of coal along the Approved ROM Coal Transport Route does not exceed 3.8 million tonnes (Mt) (for calendar year 2025) otherwise, 3.5 million tonnes each calendar year prior to commissioning of the Kamilaroi Highway Overpass. – For the period following the commissioning of the Kamilaroi Highway overpass and until commissioning of the Project Rail Spur, shall, together with the owners of the Tarrawonga and Rocglen coal mines, ensure that the cumulative haulage of coal along the Approved ROM Coal Transport Route does not exceed 4.5 Mt. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Increase in cumulative haulage of ROM coal along the southern section of the Approved ROM Coal Transport Route up to 4.1 Mtpa for calendar years 2026 to end 2030 without construction of the Kamilaroi Highway overpass.
Other Project Components	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – As described in documents listed in the Definitions section of Development Consent (SSD 7480). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – No change.