



HVO South Open Cut Coal Continuation Project submission of support

State Significant Development no. SSD-11826621

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Introduction

Hunter Valley Operations (HVO) is an open-cut coal mine located approximately 230km North of Sydney with a workforce of approximately 1500 fulltime employees and contractors¹. Mining on HVO's current lease area first began in 1949² and is now single, large mining operation that has formed from the amalgamation of multiple smaller mining operations operated by various companies. The current mining operation functions under two separate development consents which each have two separate mining completion dates; HVO North (*June, 2025*) and HVO South (*March, 2030*). HVO is a joint venture owned by Yancoal (49%) and Glencore (51%).



Photo 1 – HVO South viewed from Maison Dieu³

The proposal

The proposal is to extend the approved completion dates of HVO North to 2050 and HVO South to 2045. For HVO North, the current approval to mine the top four coal seams would be deepened to mine an extra eight coal seams (*see figure 1*), as well as the southward expansion of the Mitchell Pit (*figure 2*) towards Carrington Pit. This would require the removal of a section of Lemington Road west of the HVO North entrance, and constructing a new public road to the west of HVO South's mining operations. For HVO South, the approved mining areas of Riverview South East Extension, South Lemington Pit 1 and South Lemington Pit 2 would be forfeited. The approved maximum coal extraction (for HVO South) would be reduced from 20 Mtpa down to 18 Mtpa.

¹ Source: www.hvo.com.au

² HVO Continuation Project Scoping Report-1

³ Source: submission author

The author

The author of this submission is a married father of two young children (*ages eight & five*) who has been employed at HVO (*under the ownership of three different mining companies*) since moving to Singleton in September of 2011. The author intends to work at HVO until reaching the age of retirement (2048) and hopes that some day in the future, both of his children will have the opportunity (*after graduating high school*) to gain fulltime employment (*an apprenticeship or graduate position*) at HVO. The author owns multiple residential properties in Singleton, and provides rental accommodation to workers in the local mining industry. His family's financial wellbeing is heavily dependent on the existence of HVO and on the local coal-mining industry in the NSW Hunter Valley.

The local community

It can be argued that the financial well-being of the local community is also heavily dependent on HVO (*and on the local coal-mining industry in general*). A total of 22% of people in Singleton work in coal mining⁴. The Hunter's mining industry injected \$6.3 billion into the Hunter economy in the 2021-22 financial year⁵. In the 2022-23 financial year, local coal mines yielded Singleton Council \$8.47 million in council rates⁶ (*35.2% of the total amount*). In 2021, the Glencore P&C grants program provided over \$94 thousand in grants to the NSW Hunter region; over \$65 thousand of this were grants to five schools in the Singleton LGA⁷. One of these grants (*\$14 thousand*) went towards the purchase of safety-rubber-soft fall for play equipment at Singleton Heights Public School (*which was beneficial to the author's children*). A Yancoal grant (*from Ashton Coal*) which purchased nearly 50 solar panels for Singleton Height Pre-school⁸. The Glencore P&C grants program provided over \$118 thousand to six different schools in the Singleton LGA⁹. The local coal mining industry effectively subsidises the council rates that local residents pay and provides significant financial benefit to the local community.



Photo 2 – solar panels on Singleton Heights Pre-school¹⁰

⁴ <https://www.singleton.nsw.gov.au/Business/Doing-Business-in-Singleton/LGA-information>

⁵ <https://www.singleton.nsw.gov.au/Council/Media-Centre/News/Singleton-and-Muswellbrook-call-for-statutory-body-to-ensure-region%E2%80%99s-prosperity>

⁶ https://www.ipart.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/cm9_documents/Singleton-Council-Attachment---5---Council-Report--Revenue-Policy.PDF

⁷ <https://www.glencore.com.au/operations-and-projects/coal/media-and-insights/news/glencore-provides-more-than-270000-dollars-for-school-projects>

⁸ <https://www.singletonheightspreschool.com.au/solarpanels/>

⁹ <https://www.singletonargus.com.au/story/6502758/school-grants-from-glencore/>

¹⁰ Source: report author

Moses Crossing flooding

The proposal to relocated Lemington Road includes the construction of a new bridge across the Hunter River will be of benefit to motorists and to the local community. The current Lemington Road crossing (*Moses Crossing*) is a low-level bridge near the Golden-Highway end of Lemington Road. Extrapolated historical river-level data from the upstream Liddell Pump Station monitoring point indicates that Moses crossing has been underwater for over 19,000 hours cumulatively between 2010 and 2022¹¹. The proposed bridge height above the river is intended to meet the flood-protection of a one-in-ten-year flood. Had the proposed relocation and bridge construction of Lemington Road existed prior to 2010, there would have been no road closures due to flooding, between then and now; the public would have been provided with adequate road access between the Golden Highway and the New England Highway.

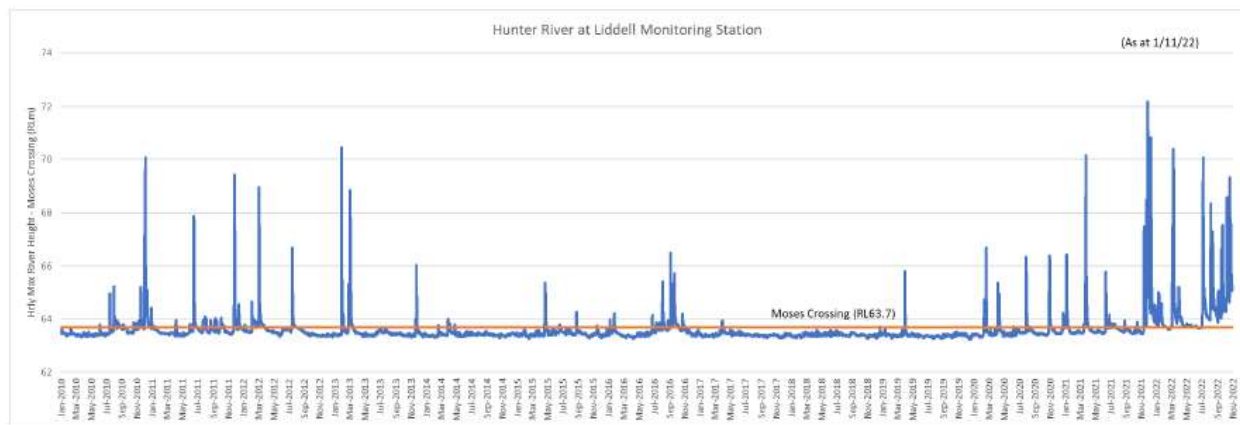


Figure 1 – extrapolated historical data of Hunter River height at Moses Crossing (2010 to 2022)¹¹

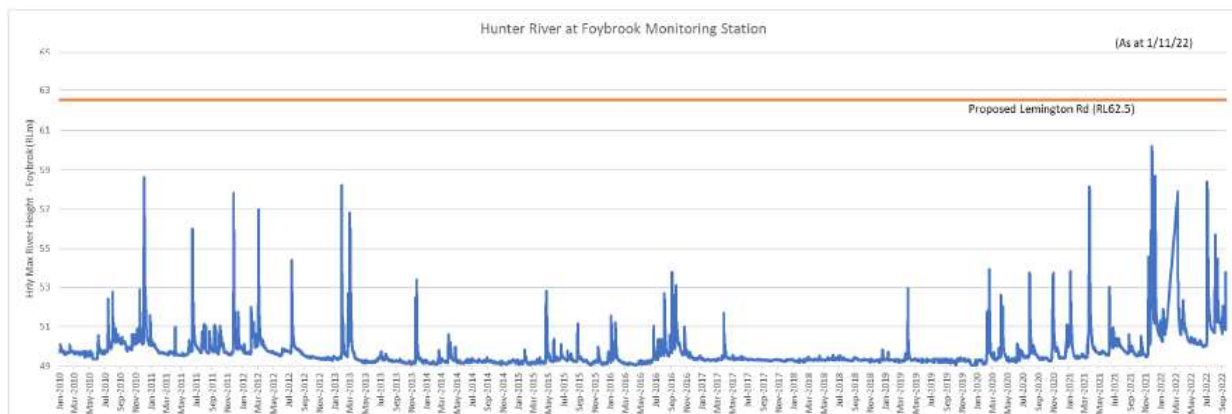


Figure 2 – extrapolated historical data of Hunter River height at proposed bridge (2010 to 2022)¹¹

It is worth noting that flood waters often leave sediment on the crossing's bridge which remains after the water subsides, as well as washing out the section of dirt road on the northern end of the bridge. This often leaves the crossing closed to traffic for weeks or even months after a flood event. The 19,000-hour figure quoted above is a conservative estimate of the amount of time that the bridge has spent closed. For example, flooding shown in photos 3 & 4 resulted in road closure (photos 5 & 6). The road did not reopen until nine weeks later (see figure 3).

¹¹ HVO Continuation Project – EIS Main Report



Photo 3 – Moses Crossing flooded at 2.6 metres (3rd November, 2022)¹²



Photo 4 – Moses Crossing flooded at 2.6 metres (3rd November, 2022)¹²

¹² Source: submission author



Photo 5 – Moses Crossing flooded at 2.6 metres (15th November, 2022)¹³



Photo 6 – Moses Crossing flooded at 2.6 metres (15th November, 2022)¹³

¹³ Source: submission author



Figure 3 – Singleton Council notification of Mosses Crossing reopening after flood damage¹⁴

The realignment of Lemington Road will be of considerable benefit to motorists and also to the mining industry. The crossing of the Hunter River will transform from an unreliable, narrow bridge which only permits traffic in one direction at a time, to a flood-immune bridge that will permit two way traffic and will be suitable for B-double traffic. The realigned Lemington Road will also provide improved accessibility for cyclists with road shoulders that provide separation from the vehicle-travel lane¹⁵.

The author suggests that the improvement to Lemington Road is a strong justification for approving the HVO North and HVO South continuation proposals. At the time of writing (23/2/2023), Lemington Road has been closed indefinitely for nearly a week (see *failure location in figure 4*).

¹⁴ Source: <https://www.facebook.com/SingletonCouncil>

¹⁵ HVO Continuation Project – EIS Main Report

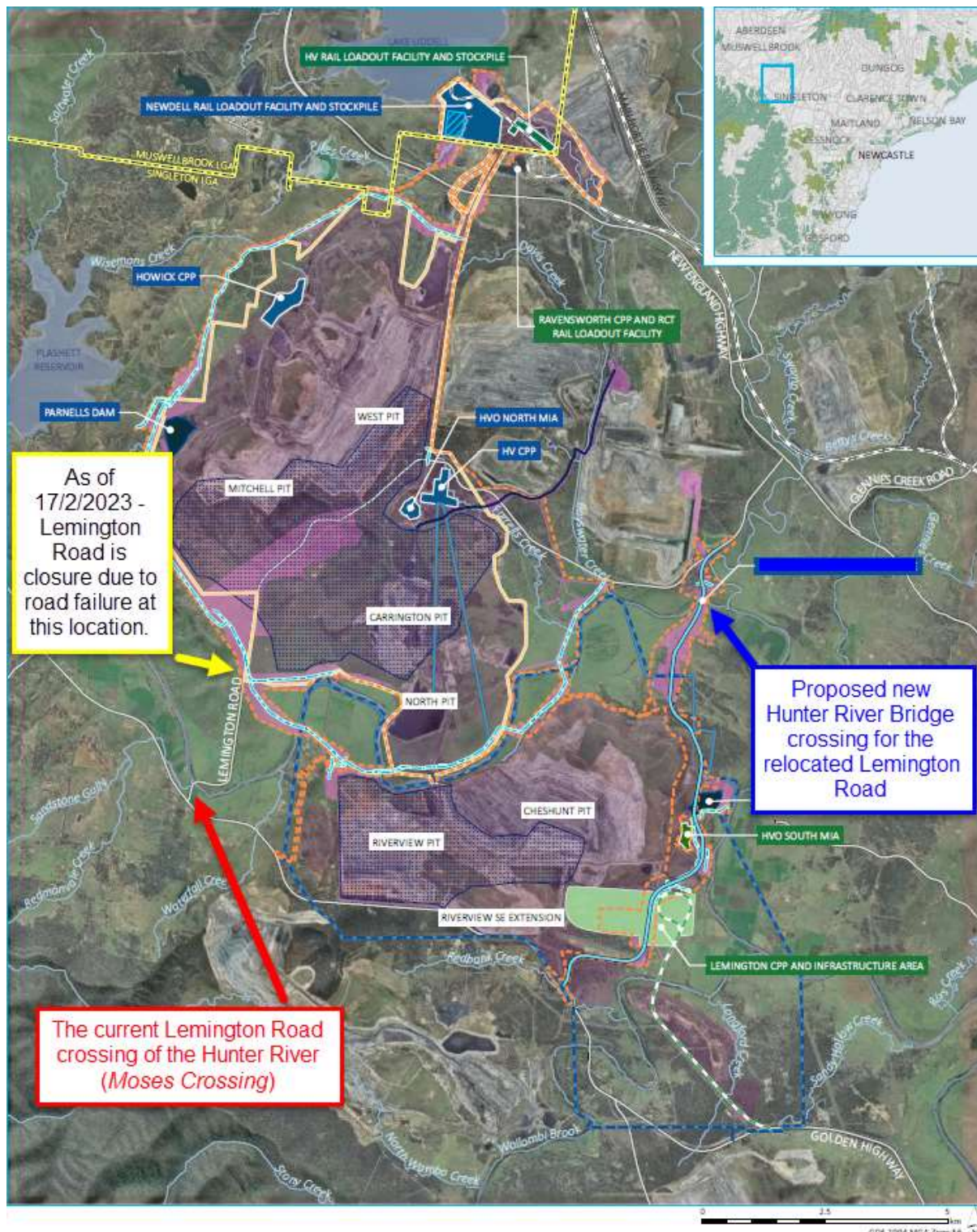


Figure 4 – proposed realignment of Lemington Road and the existing Hunter-River crossing (*Moses Crossing*)¹⁶

¹⁶ HVO Continuation Project – EIS Main Report



Photo 7 – HVO South as viewed from the Golden Highway¹⁷

Conclusion

The HVO South and HVO North Open Cut Coal Continuation Projects will provide many benefits to the workforce and to the local community. This is not an application for a new mine, it is the continuation of a mine that has existed for over seventy years. The realignment of Lemington Road will be of great benefit to motorists in the area and to the local economy. There are many reasons that support the approval of the project proposals; this submission has only covered a small number of these reasons. This submission is written in good faith and every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of its information and to provide sources for all content contained within. The author's interest in this project has been declared.

¹⁷ Source: submission author