

Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc PO Box 24, New Lambton, NSW 2305 www.hboc.org.au ABN 62 415 889 446

RE: MODIFICATION 5 BLOOMFIELD COLLIERY CONTINUATION PROJECT

The Hunter Bird Observers Club (HBOC) is providing herewith a submission objecting to the Modification 5 Bloomfield Colliery Continuation Project.

One of the key flaws with the Biodiversity Development Assessment Report (EcoResolve 2025) is the dismissal of impacts on the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater.

The fact that the Bloomfield site has not been included in the DCCEEW Regent Honeyeater Important Habitat Mapping does not imply that there is not important habitat for Regent Honeyeaters present. No targeted searches for Regent Honeyeaters have been made when they are likely to have been breeding (i.e. when local ironbarks [*E. siderophloia* and *E. fibrosa*] have been flowering) and given the restrictions to access to the site it is impossible to say that important habitat attributes are not present. Aside from being an important breeding region, the Lower Hunter is unique because it also offers winter-feeding resources for Regent Honeyeaters in the form of Spotted Gums. In 2024 when the Lower Hunter Spotted Gums flowered, there were more than 30 Regent Honeyeaters found; all of them within or nearby to Lower Hunter Spotted Gum-Ironbark Forest (LHSGIF) should therefore be viewed as vitally important to Regent Honeyeaters because it is one of the few breeding/winter habitats remaining for a species with an extremely restricted contemporary range.

It is important to note that three large-scale releases of zoo-bred Regent Honeyeaters have been made within the Tomalpin Woodlands, which are only 11km from the project site. Further, the assertion in Table 28 on Page 137 of the Biodiversity Development Assessment Report that "...*no recent species sightings or important populations have been recorded within a 10 km radius of the subject land in the past 5 years*" is incorrect. Several wild birds, including two first-year juveniles were found approximately 6km from the Creek Cut Area in autumn 2023, not long after a release of zoo-bred birds were made in the Tomalpin Woodlands. These two juveniles represented the only evidence of any breeding anywhere across the range of the Regent Honeyeater during the 2022 breeding season. See here for details.

The assessment states (at least twice) that for Regent Honeyeaters "...there are only three known key breeding regions remaining: north-east Victoria (Chiltern-Albury), and in NSW at Capertee Valley and the Bundarra-Barraba region." This information is outdated. The vast majority of breeding in the past decade (and the only successful breeding in the past 5 years) have been in one of three regions; the Capertee Valley, the Upper Hunter (Goulburn River) and Lower Hunter (Cessnock-Kurri woodlands) (Regent Honeyeater Recovery Team data).

The Regent Honeyeater Recovery Team are facilitating the arduous and expensive task of having Taronga Zoo breed Regent Honeyeaters in captivity, supplementing the extremely small wild population intermittently with the release of zoo-bred birds. As is conceded in the biodiversity assessment report, the loss and fragmentation of habitat has been the key driver to Regent Honeyeaters becoming critically endangered. It does not make any ecological or economic sense to be further contributing to this threat when great resources are being spent trying to reverse the serious declines and stave off an impending extinction.

To state that "No pairs occur within the proposed project area or adjacent area (DCCEW 2024)" (sic) is impossible to justify because there have been no dedicated searches for Regent Honeyeaters in the study area. The assessment rightly considers that there will be an impact upon Swift Parrots, which are also listed as critically endangered nationally. Regent Honeyeaters clearly depend on this forest type more than Swift Parrots, as they breed only in Tasmania.

HBOC maintains that there should be no further loss of any contemporary breeding and wintering habitat for any species on the brink of extinction including those species dependant upon the Lower Hunter Spotted Gum – Ironbark Forest EEC, offsets cannot be relied upon to address ongoing habitat loss, and HBOC is of the opinion that the assessment of Regent Honeyeaters within the biodiversity assessment is flawed.

This submission was prepared by Mick Roderick on behalf of the Conservation Sub-Committee, Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc. 15th May 2025.

References

EcoResolve (2025). Biodiversity Development Assessment Report. Modification 5 (MP07_0087) Bloomfield Colliery, Four Mile Creek, NSW.

Heinsohn, R., Lacy, R., Elphinstone, A., Ingwersen, D., Pitcher, B., Roderick, M., Schmelitshek, E., Van Sluys, M., Stojanovic, D., Tripovich, J., & Crates, R. (2022). *Population viability in data deficient nomadic species: What it will take to save regent honeyeaters from extinction*. Biological Conservation, 266, 109430.

About the Hunter Bird Observers Club

Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc. (HBOC) was established in 1976 and currently has a membership of 400 members. Although the Club is based in Newcastle NSW membership includes members from other areas in NSW and from interstate.

Aims of HBOC

1. To encourage and further the study and conservation of Australian birds and their habitat 2. To educate members and the public, encouraging an interest in Australian birds & their habitat

Activities include monthly regular outings, evening meetings, camps and field studies. HBOC promotes systematic field studies which include regular surveys by volunteers from the membership.

All data gathered from field studies are entered into the national bird record database administered by BirdLife Australia; Birdata <u>https://birdata.birdlife.org.au/</u>. Data are used to underpin conservation issues and HBOC promotes systematic surveys and data collection.

HBOC has a long history of working in collaboration with local councils, national parks and other state agencies, industry and schools. For more information go to <u>www.hboc.org.au</u>