



Nature Conservation Council

The voice for nature in NSW

Monday 17th November 2025

**Submission to the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
RE: Mod 8 - Ulan West Continued Operations, MP08_0184-Mod-8**

The Nature Conservation Council of New South Wales (NCC) is the state's peak environment organisation. We represent over 200 environment groups across NSW. Together we are dedicated to protecting and conserving the wildlife, landscapes and natural resources of NSW.

NCC objects to Modification 8 - Ulan West Continued Operations. The modification application should be rescinded as it relies on the approval of Modification 6 (MP08_0184-Mod-6), which has recently been declared invalid in the Land and Environment Court (Case 2025/323207). We object to the proposal as it stands due to unacceptable environmental, social and climate change risks.

The project is no longer valid after Modification 6 has been declared invalid and should be rescinded as an application

Modification 6 extended the mine's operational life from 2033 to 2035, and Modification 8 depends entirely on this extension, covering the period from 2035 to 2041. With the overturning of Modification 6, there is no valid foundation for Modification 8 to proceed. Furthermore, the infrastructure proposed in Modification 8 is directly connected to the underground longwall panels of Modification 6, and without Mod 6 in place, this infrastructure cannot be used, rendering Modification 8 fundamentally unviable.

The project would create unacceptable climate harm for the local community and NSW.

The project would contribute an additional 106.3 MtCO₂-e, furthering climate change and its impacts on NSW and the local community. The Mid-Western Region is vulnerable to climate impacts, such as increased bushfire risk, flood risk and heatwaves. The costs to health, infrastructure and the economy from climate impacts far outweighs the economic benefit of the proposal.



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This project would not commence for another 10 years, until 2035. By seeking approval now, Glencore may be attempting to lock in permissions before stronger environmental and climate standards come into force. Approving a proposal so far into the future is unjustifiable. To keep climate change within safe limits, fossil fuel emissions must fall rapidly, and extending coal mining to 2041 is fundamentally incompatible with a commitment to reach net zero as soon as possible, which is what is necessary to protect communities from the catastrophic impacts of global warming.

Guidance from the International Energy Agency says methane emissions need to fall by 75% by 2030 to avoid catastrophic climate impacts. Methane emissions from coal mines are estimated to be double what reported, according to analysis from Open Methane. Glencore does not publicly report methane emissions, and there is no independent tracking or verification of estimated methane emissions. This project should not be considered for approval without independent assessment of the methane impacts.

Given the recent NSW Court of Appeal decision regarding the Mt Pleasant coal mine (Denman ruling), furthered by the declaring invalid of Ulan Coal Mine Modification 6, the proponent should be required to resubmit a comprehensive environmental impact statement that outlines the expected climate change impacts on the local community because of emissions associated with the proposal. The EIS must be subject to public consultation with impacted communities per the ruling.

The consideration of emissions should include emissions from existing operations as well as proposed expansions or extensions as it is the totality of these emissions that contribute to climate change, with localised impacts.

Consideration of climate change impacts should extend to social, environmental and economic impacts, including impacts on species and biodiversity.

The scale of Modification 8 represents a fundamentally new project and should not be treated as a modification.

The Modification 8 proposal lies entirely outside the current approved mine lease. It would disturb an additional 1,734 ha of land and add new infrastructure, including a 132 ha tailings dam. Its impacts extends significantly beyond the original project, with damage to a new area of Wiradjuri cultural significance, impacts on 17 private properties, a large increase in emissions (an additional 45% on previous operations, including the recently overturned Modification 6), and other new impacts. Because of these substantial changes in footprint, impacts, and duration, Modification 8 should be assessed as a new project with full environmental scrutiny and independent evaluation, not as a modification that shortcuts proper evaluation.



The proposal poses significant risks to groundwater, river systems, and downstream ecosystems.

Subsidence from longwall mining can reduce groundwater baseflows to rivers and creeks, including the Talbragar River which feeds the Macquarie Marshes, a nationally significant wetland. The project would also extend mine-water discharge into the Goulburn River, releasing over 15,000 tonnes of salt (around 7 tonnes/day) into the Goulburn/Hunter River system. There is insufficient detail about seepage risks from the new tailings dam near the river. The Cumulative Impact Scoping Report acknowledges that the proposed modification, the Moolarben OC3 Extension Project, and the existing Wilpinjong and Moolarben Coal Operations would collectively affect both groundwater and surface water systems. However, the cumulative impacts of these three mines on the Goulburn River have not been adequately assessed, addressed, or mitigated.

The expansion would destroy important habitat for threatened species and degrade critical ecological communities.

The biodiversity impacts of Modification 8 are extensive and significantly underestimated in the current assessment.

The proposed project would damage fragile sandstone landscapes, including cliffs, caves, and rocky escarpments, that provide irreplaceable habitat for threatened microbat species such as the Large-eared Pied Bat and the Eastern Cave Bat. These specialised habitats cannot be recreated or offset once destroyed. Modification 8 would directly impact up to 101.45 ha of Large-eared Pied Bat habitat and 77.59 ha of Eastern Cave Bat habitat, placing both endangered species at further risk of decline.

The proposal would directly impact up to 101.45 ha of native vegetation, including ~34ha of Box Gum Woodland, a critically endangered community. Important habitat for the barking owl and powerful owl is also at risk.

The impact on other endangered species has not been clearly addressed. The Hunter Valley Delma was not assessed in the Ulan Mod 8 Biodiversity Assessment because the species was only listed as protected on 4 August 2025, after field surveys were completed in July 2025. In addition, the assessment does not adequately account for known Regent Honeyeater breeding activity in the region, or the cumulative and ongoing disturbance of Koala habitat in the region.

Taken together, these omissions and documented impacts show that Modification 8 would cause substantial and irreversible harm to the region's biodiversity, and the proposal should not proceed without rigorous assessment and avoidance of these impacts.



The project continues the ongoing destruction of the Wiradjuri cultural landscape, further destroying Wiradjuri cultural heritage sites and failing to guarantee their protection.

The Aboriginal Cultural Values Assessment (ACVA) notes that “piecemeal landscape change on Wiradjuri Country was eroding the Wiradjuri cultural landscape bit-by-bit.” Despite this, the ACVA underestimates the significance of the area to the Wiradjuri people and their long history of use, and it does not assess the cumulative loss of significant Aboriginal cultural heritage across the Ulan region. The proposal area contains 71 known Aboriginal heritage sites, including rock art and complex cultural landscapes that may be impacted, and because the final infrastructure layout is not yet determined, there is uncertainty about which sites could be damaged or destroyed. These sites are part of a spiritual landscape, not simply isolated points. As emphasised in the ACVA by Kylie Manson, Chairperson of the Warrabinga Wiradjuri #7 Native Title Claimants, “the area within the Ulan Coal Mine lease holds high cultural significance to our people. The recognition and protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage in this landscape is of the utmost importance to us.”.

The proposal would harm residents through property impacts, water loss, and long-term uncertainty.

The extension would undermine 17 private properties, including 4 homes, and affect 6 private bores, with the risk of dewatering. Proposed mitigation measures, such as replacement water, are temporary and may cease once mining ends. The Ulan area has seen many properties be bought out by the mines over time. This continues the dismantling of the local community.

NCC urges the Department to refuse Modification 8 - Ulan West Continued Operations and require any further expansion proposals to be assessed as State Significant Development applications with full environmental, cultural, and social assessment.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission. Your contact person at Nature Conservation Council of NSW is Coal Mining and Methane Campaigner, Manjot Kaur (mkaur@nature.org.au).

Yours sincerely,



Jacqui Mumford
CEO of Nature Conversation Council NSW

