



Our Ref: 3109/DH/PDJ/EH/20150512

12 May 2015

Nicole Simons
Senior Scientist – SALIS Information System
Ecosystem Management Science Branch
Office of Environment and Heritage
PO Box 644
PARRAMATTA NSW 2124

Dear Nicole

Re: Mount Owen Continued Operations Project – Site Verification Certificate

This letter provides context and clarification about an application for a Site Verification Certificate for the Mount Owen Continued Operations Project (the Project) in the Hunter Valley of NSW.

Mount Owen Pty Limited (Mount Owen), a wholly owned subsidiary of Glencore, proposes to extend the area of mining operations at the Mount Owen Mine, supporting the continued operation of the mine for an additional 12 years from the existing approved mine life. The Project will impact on areas approved for mining related disturbance as well as approximately 485 hectares of land not previously disturbed by mining operations (although some of this area has been disturbed by other activities such as road and railway related activities). The Proposed Disturbance Area for the Project is divided into three distinct areas (refer to **Figure 1**).

Land and soils within the Project Area are within the area of the *Upper Hunter Strategic Regional Land Use Plan* (Upper Hunter SRLUP). Land and Soil Capability and soil fertility have been previously mapped at the regional scale by the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH). The Project Area includes land mapped as Land and Soil Capability Classes 4 to 7 and generally of low to moderately-low fertility. A small area of Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land (BSAL) mapped along Bowmans Creek in the Upper Hunter SRLUP is affected by proposed infrastructure upgrades for the Project. No BSAL was mapped at the regional scale elsewhere within the Project Area or in any of the proposed offset areas.

A Soil Assessment for the Project has been prepared in accordance with the *Interim Protocol for Site Verification and Mapping of Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land* (OEH and OASFS 2013) on behalf of the Proponent (Mount Owen).

The soil assessment was prepared to:

- confirm the land and soil capability affected by the Project including the areas along Bowmans Creek impacted by the proposed Hebden Road Upgrade and whether these resources meet the BSAL criteria;
- verify soil types across the Project Area;
- provide information to assist with site rehabilitation planning, particularly in relation to any soils suitable for stockpiling for use in rehabilitation works; and
- determine appropriate post mining target land and soil capability for the Project Area.

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Based on the field and laboratory data, no part of the Proposed Disturbance Area meets the criteria for BSAL. The proposed disturbance area either does not satisfy slope criteria and/or does not satisfy the soil fertility criteria. Umwelt soil scientists consulted representatives of the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) (Agriculture) on site as part of the assessment process, including inspection of key landforms and soil types and discussion of field and laboratory soil data. DPI agreed that the soil materials do not satisfy the BSAL criteria based on data collected at the Project scale. No BSAL is affected by the Project.

Soil Assessment Data

The preparation of the Soil Assessment for the Project included the description of 27 soil profiles across the proposed disturbance area. Consistent with the requirements of the *Interim Protocol for Site Verification and Mapping of Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land*, soil sampling was not undertaken in areas mapped as containing endangered ecological communities (EECs) or containing items of Aboriginal cultural heritage, but surface observations were made in these areas. In addition to the field based profile descriptions, samples of A and B horizon material from selected profiles were submitted to the Soil Conservation Service Scone Laboratory for analysis of parameters required by the Interim Protocol.

The recorded land and soil information from field observations and laboratory analyses for each soil sampling site have been uploaded to the Electronic Digital Infield Regolith Tool (eDIRT), OEH's internet based application for the collection of soil profile information. The profile summaries for each soil sampling site have been submitted to the NSW Soil and Land Information System (SALIS), with the applicable survey number provided at submission being 1005307 (Mount Owen Continued Operations Project). It is noted that eDIRT has been used in lieu of the provision of hard copies of the BSAL site verification data cards as per discussions with you.

The following supporting documents are submitted for review:

- Soil Assessment prepared for the Project in accordance with the *Interim Protocol for Site Verification and Mapping of Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land*; and
- Certification of Mount Owen Continued Operation Project Soil Assessment by a qualified Peer Reviewer;

It is noted that GIS output files and metadata statements for the Soil Assessment report have not been provided at this time due to the file size being in excess of 100 Megabytes (MB). This information will be provided at a later date, either via a CD/DVD or dropbox.

Landholder Notification

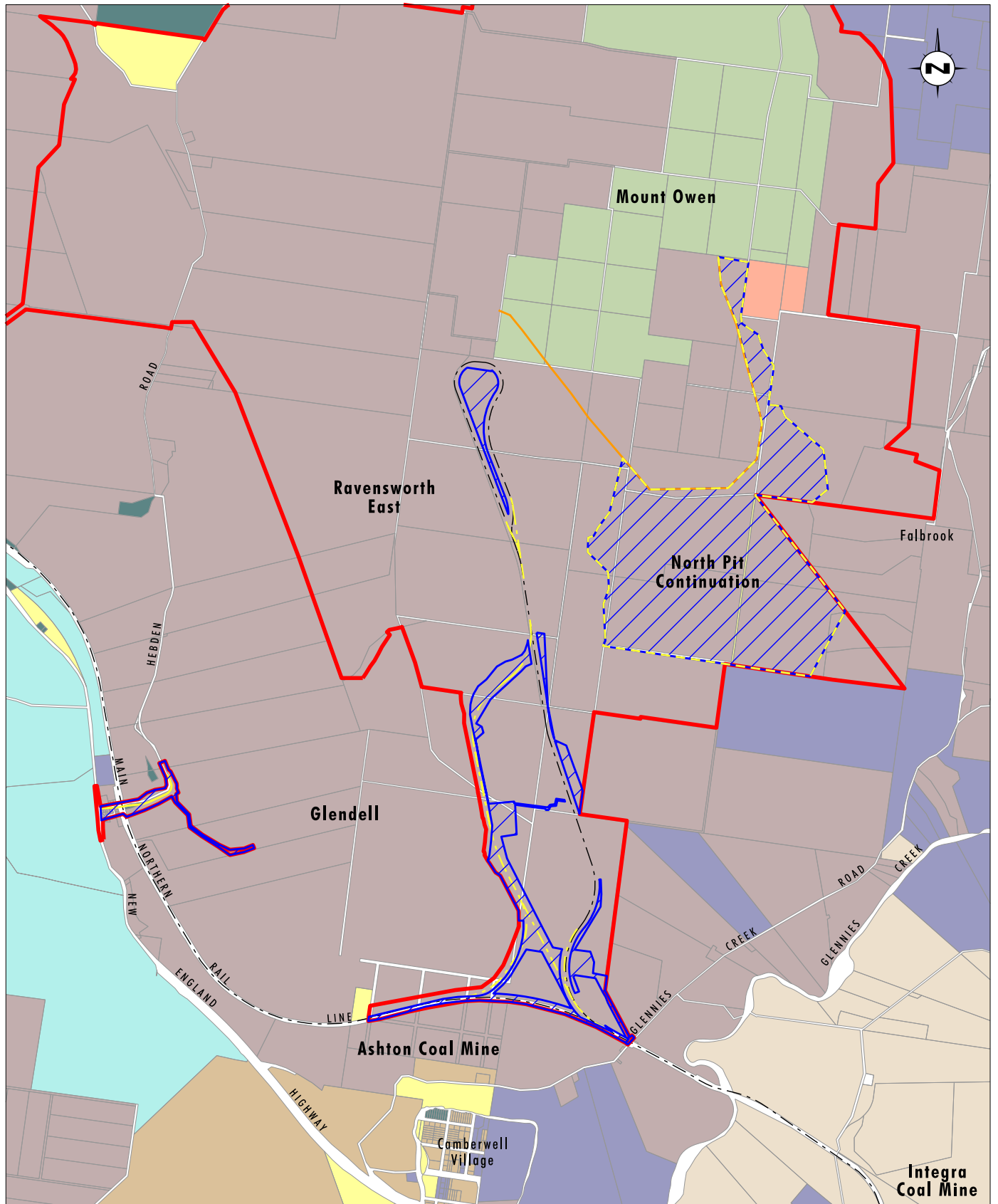
All land within the proposed disturbance area for the Project is either owned by Glencore or is Crown land associated with road reserves (refer to **Figure 1**). Relevant roads authorities have been consulted regarding the Project and its potential impact on land managed by them.

If you would like clarification of any issue associated with the application for a BSAL Site Verification Certificate, please contact Pam Dean-Jones or David Holmes at Umwelt (Australia) Pty Limited on (02) 4950-5322.

Yours sincerely



Barbara Crossley
Director



Data Source: Mount Owen (2014), Department of Lands (2009)

0 0.5 1.0 2.0 km
1:50 000

Legend

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| — Project Area | Ashton Coal | Glencore |
| Proposed Disturbance Area | Crown Land | Private |
| Approved North Pit Mining Extent | Crown Land TSR | State Forest |
| Proposed North Pit Continuation | Government Authority | |
| Proposed Rail Upgrade Works | Integra Coal | |
| Proposed Hebden Road Upgrade Works | Macquarie Generation | |

FIGURE 1
Land Ownership