



Our Ref: 3109/DH/PDJ/EH/20150911

11 September 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 – Revised Site Verification Certificate

This letter provides context and clarification about a revised 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 Verification Application Area (VAA) for the Project is shown on **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 VAA is predominately land mapped as Land and Soil Capability Class 6 and of moderately-low fertility. No BSAL was mapped at the regional scale within the VAA.

A Revised Application for Verification of Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land for the VAA 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 Revised Application for Verification of Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land was prepared to:

- confirm the land and soil capability affected by the Project in the VAA and whether these resources meet the BSAL criteria; and
- verify soil types across the VAA.

Based on the field and laboratory data, no part of the VAA meets the criteria for BSAL. The VAA 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.

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Soil Assessment Data

The preparation of the Revised Application for Verification of Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land for the Project included the description of 6 detailed and 6 check site soil profiles across the VAA. 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 of dense vegetation (including those 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 Revised Application for Verification of Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land prepared for the Project in accordance with the *Interim Protocol for Site Verification and Mapping of Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land* is submitted for review:

It is noted that GIS output files and metadata statements for the Revised Application for Verification of Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land 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 (refer to **Figure 1**). Relevant roads authorities have been consulted regarding the Project and its potential impact on land managed by them.

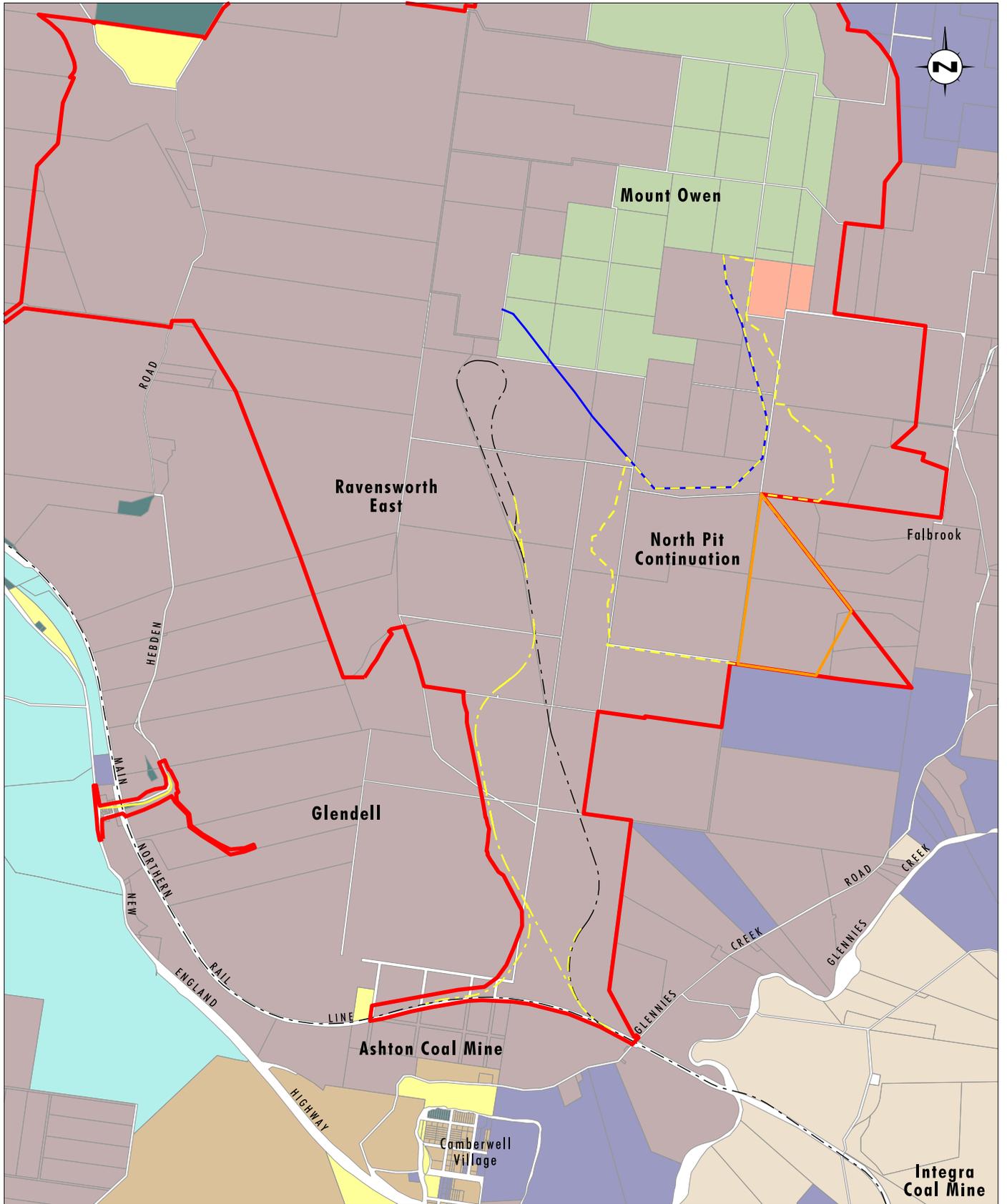
If you would like clarification of any issue associated with the application for a BSAL Site Verification Certificate, please contact Pam Dean-Jones or David Holmes at Umwelt (Australia) Pty Limited on (02) 4950-5322.

Yours sincerely



David Holmes

Principal Environmental Consultant - Approvals & Policy



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

0 0.5 1.0 2.0km
1:50 000

Legend

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------|
| Project Area | Ashton Coal | Glencore |
| Verification Application 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