

Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure

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Modification 2 of Vickery Extension Project, Modification 11 of Tarrawonga Coal Mine and Modification 5 of Rocglen Extension Project

State Significant Development Modification Assessment Report

(SSD-7480-MOD-2, MP11_0047-MOD-11 and MP10_0015-MOD-5)

October 2025



Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure acknowledges that it stands on Aboriginal land. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land and show our respect for Elders past, present and emerging through thoughtful and collaborative approaches to our work, seeking to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to providing places in which Aboriginal people are included socially, culturally and economically.

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Assessment Report

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1 Introduction

Whitehaven Coal Limited (Whitehaven) owns the Vickery Coal Mine (Vickery), the Tarrawonga Coal Mine (Tarrawonga) and the Rocglen Coal Mine (Rocglen), all of which are located in the Gunnedah Coalfield near Boggabri (see Figure 1). Vickery and Tarrawonga are currently in operation and Rocglen ceased mining in 2019, with rehabilitation activities currently underway on site.

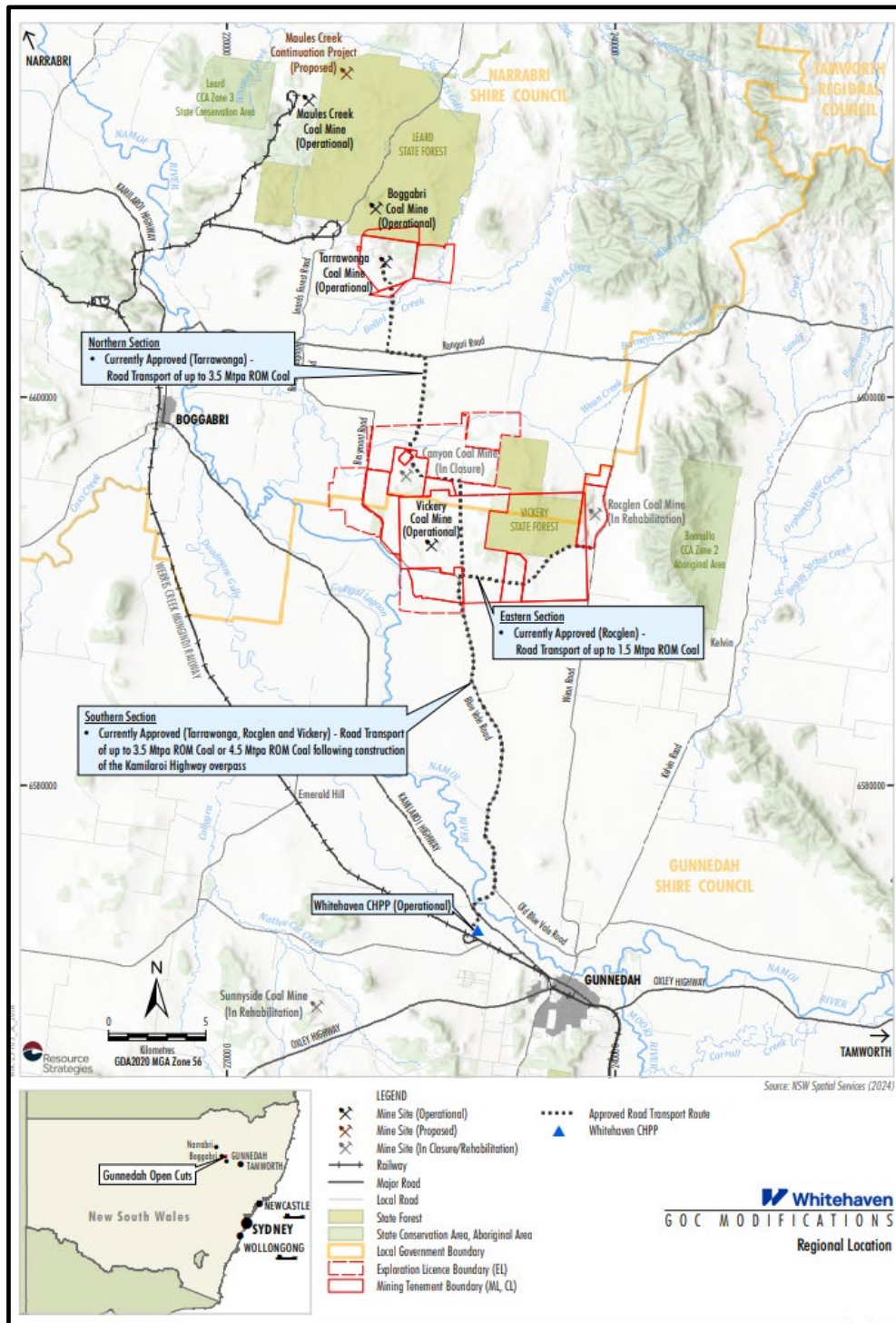


Figure 1 | Regional context map

The three mines have approval to transport run-of-mine (ROM) coal via public and private roads (referred to as the haulage route) to the Whitehaven Coal Handling and Preparation Plant (CHPP) near Gunnedah for processing. The respective development consents allow a combined total of 3.5 million tonnes per annum (Mtpa) of ROM coal¹ to be transported along the haulage route, except if an overpass is constructed over the Kamilaroi Highway, in which case the consents allow a combined total of up to 4.5 Mtpa to be transported on the haulage route.

Whitehaven has advised that ROM coal production is progressively shifting from a roughly equal split between Tarrawonga and Vickery to a greater proportion coming from Vickery.

As Vickery is located closer to the CHPP, the haulage distance is shorter allowing more efficient ROM coal haulage. The CHPP is also approved to receive and process up to 4.1 Mtpa of ROM coal. Consequently, Whitehaven is seeking permission to increase the amount of coal that can be transported on the haulage route to match the coal that may be transported to the amount that can be processed at the CHPP to maximise the use of the existing infrastructure at the CHPP.

2 Proposed modifications

The proposed modification would increase the combined ROM coal transport limit to 3.8 Mtpa for the 2025 calendar year. This ROM coal would all come from Vickery and Tarrawonga, as Rocglen is no longer producing coal. Consequently, the modification also proposes to remove the coal transport limit from Rocglen's consent.

No further changes to mining operations at Vickery and Tarrawonga are proposed.

3 Statutory context

3.1 Scope of modification and assessment pathway

Details of the legal pathway under which modification is sought and are provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1 | Permissibility and assessment pathway

Consideration	Description
Scope of modification	The modification applications and modification report were lodged under Section 4.55(1A) of the EP&A Act. The Department has reviewed the scope of the modifications and considers that they meet this requirement as: • there would be no change to mining methods or extraction limits; • there would be no change to the disturbance areas for any mine; and

¹ Only 1.5 Mtpa of ROM coal (within the combined 3.5 Mtpa limit) is permitted between Rocglen and the CHPP

Consideration	Description
	the impacts of the development as modified would be similar to the impacts of the approved project (Vickery) and the last s75W modifications that were granted under Part 3A of the EP&A Act (Tarrawonga and Rocglen). Accordingly, the Department considers that the applications can be assessed and determined under section 4.55(1A) of the EP&A Act rather than requiring a new development application to be lodged.
Consent Authority	Vickery Extension Project (SSD-7480) - The Independent Planning Commission (the Commission) was the consent authority for the original application and remains the consent authority for modification. - However, under the Commission's delegations dated 14 June 2022, the Director, Resource Assessments may determine the application. This is because Narrabri Shire Council and Gunnedah Shire Council did not object to the modifications and Whitehaven has not disclosed any reportable political donations. Tarrawonga Coal Mine (MP11_0047) and Rocglen Extension Project (MP10_0015) - The then Minister for Planning and Infrastructure (the Minister) was the consent authority for the original applications and remains the consent authority for modifications. - However, under the Minister's delegation dated 9 March 2022, the Director, Resource Assessments may determine the applications. This is because Narrabri Shire Council and Gunnedah Shire Council did not object to the modifications and Whitehaven has not disclosed any reportable political donations.

3.2 Mandatory matters for consideration

3.2.1 Matters of consideration required by the EP&A Act

In determining the modifications, the consent authority must take into consideration such of the matters referred to in section 4.15(1) of the EP&A Act as are of relevance to the developments the subject of the applications. The consent authority must also take into consideration the reasons given by the consent authority for the grant of the consents that is sought to be modified.

The Department assessed the proposals against the mandatory matters for consideration as part of the original assessments for each mine. The Department considers that these modification applications do not result in significant changes that would alter the mandatory matters for consideration under Section 4.15 of the EP&A Act and the conclusions made as part of the original assessments.

3.2.2 Objects of the EP&A Act

In determining whether or not to modify the consents, the consent authority should consider whether the modified projects are consistent with the relevant objects of the EP&A Act (section 1.3), including the principles of ecologically sustainable development. Consideration of those factors is described in Appendix B.

The Department is satisfied that the developments are consistent with the objectives of the EP&A Act and the principles of ecologically sustainable development (ESD).

3.2.3 Biodiversity development assessment report

Section 7.17(2) of the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (BC Act) requires all SSD modifications to be accompanied by a Biodiversity Development Assessment Report (BDAR) unless the authority or person determining the application is satisfied that the modification will not increase the impact on biodiversity values (as identified in the BC Act and in the *Biodiversity Conservation Regulation 2017*).

The Department is satisfied that the modification would not increase the impact on biodiversity values and consequently a BDAR is not required to accompany the modification applications.

4 Engagement

4.1 Department’s engagement

In accordance with the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021*, the Department made the modification applications publicly available on the Department’s website on Monday 25 August 2025 and also forwarded the applications to the Environment Protection Authority (EPA), Transport for NSW (TfNSW), Narrabri Shire Council and Gunnedah Shire Council.

A summary of the agency advice and council comments is provided in Table 2. A link to the full copies is provided in Appendix A.

Table 2 | Summary of agency advice and council comments

Agency	Advice summary
Environment Protection Authority (EPA)	- Did not raise concerns with the modification but queried whether emissions from diesel combustion should be classified as scope 1 rather than scope 3. - Noted that the modification is unlikely to trigger assessment requirements in the <i>NSW EPA Guide for Large Emitters</i>. However, recommended that future applications should be consistent with the guide.

Agency	Advice summary
Transport for NSW (TfNSW)	• Raised no concerns with the modification.
Narrabri Shire Council	• Raised concerns about traffic impacts and recommended that Whitehaven should commission a road safety audit by 31 December 2025. • Noted that while minor, increased amenity impacts would occur and Whitehaven should ensure residents along the approved haulage route are not adversely impacted. Whitehaven noted that they would continue to manage potential impacts in accordance with approved management plans. • Supported the removal of haulage conditions from Rocglen's consent and note that rehabilitation works should continue on site, which Whitehaven acknowledged. • Recommended some additional conditions that are already requirements or not related to the modification.
Gunnedah Shire Council	• Raised concerns regarding the capacity of the roads along the haulage route, particularly the carrying capacity of the Ballyragen Bridge. This is discussed further in Section 5. • Noted that Whitehaven must ensure that no dilapidation of Gunnedah Council's assets occurs. Whitehaven noted that the existing road maintenance agreement with Gunnedah Council for Vickery would continue to apply and would be reviewed and/or renewed once 3.5 Mtpa was reached (in accordance with condition B77 of the consent for Vickery).

5 Assessment

The Department has assessed the modification applications and supporting information in accordance with the relevant requirements of the EP&A Act, including the matters for consideration, as set out in section 4.15(2) of the EP&A Act.

The Department's consideration of all matters relating to the modifications are summarised in Table 3 below.

Table 3 | Assessment of issues

Issue	Findings and conclusions	Recommended conditions
Transport	• The original traffic assessment prepared for the Vickery Coal Project (SSD-5000, 2012) and additional assessments for Tarrawonga and Rocglen (2016) was based on up to 612 truck movements on weekdays and 412 movements on Saturdays for transporting 3.5 Mtpa of ROM coal. • Whitehaven has since started using larger trucks with higher payloads (increase from 42 to 62 tonnes) and as a result, daily truck movements have reduced. • The traffic assessment² prepared by The Transport Planning Partnership (TPPP) for these modifications was based on up to 452 movements on weekdays and up to 334 movements on Saturdays, which is equivalent to an increase of approximately two movements per hour compared to the current number of haulage trips limited to 3.5 Mtpa. However, there would be lower number of movements compared to the original traffic assessment – with an overall reduction of around 25%. • The traffic assessment also concluded that the modifications would not affect the capacity of the roads and intersections along the haulage route, and intersections could continue to operate to an acceptable level of service. • TfNSW raised no concerns with the modification. • Gunnedah Shire Council raised concerns about damage to the roads. In this regard Whitehaven noted that they have an existing road maintenance agreement with Gunnedah Shire Council that would be reviewed and/or renewed once haulage increases above 3.5 Mtpa, as required by the conditions of the Vickery consent. • Gunnedah Shire Council has confirmed it has no further concerns.	Increase the 2025 ROM coal transport limit to 3.8 Mtpa in the Vickery and Tarrawonga consents. Remove the road haulage conditions (schedule 2, conditions 6A and 6B) from the Rocglen consent.

² The traffic assessment prepared by TPPP was based off the assumption that haulage is spread evenly over weekdays and Saturdays and is undertaken for 48 weeks per year. This assumption is consistent with the approach undertaken for the 2019 and 2024 assessments prepared by TPPP.

Issue	Findings and conclusions	Recommended conditions
	- Narrabri Shire Council recommended that a road safety audit should be undertaken by the end of the year. However, given overall traffic volumes would be lower than what was originally predicted, and also given the modification only proposes to increase the haulage volumes for this calendar year, the Department considers there would be no benefit from such an audit and has not recommended a condition to that effect. - The existing conditions for the mines require Whitehaven to operate in accordance with approved traffic management plans and the Department considers traffic impacts can be adequately managed.	
Noise	- The road noise assessment for the modifications concluded that the additional trips would result in a 0.4 decibel (dB) increase to existing road noise levels. Regardless of the slight increase, predicted noise levels would still remain below the road traffic noise criteria in the development consents. - Whitehaven also has noise agreements in place with the majority of landowners along the approved haulage route, which would continue to apply. - The EPA raised no concerns with the modifications, and the Department considers that the increase is likely to result in negligible changes to existing road noise levels.	No changes to conditions.
Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions	- The approved haulage route is fully sealed to minimise dust generation. Whitehaven is also required to manage any residual dust impacts in accordance with the environment protection licences (EPLs) for each mine, including covering all loads prior to haul trucks leaving the mines. - The Department also notes that the Vickery development consent is already approved to operate at a higher extraction rate of up to 9.8 Mtpa and that the greenhouse gas emissions from this rate had already been considered in the original Vickery determination in relation to Scope 3 emissions. This modification would not increase the	No changes to conditions.

Issue	Findings and conclusions	Recommended conditions
	approved Scope 3 greenhouse gas emissions of the project and therefore there would be no change to impacts of climate change on the locality as a result of burning of the coal.	

6 Evaluation

The Department's assessment has considered the relevant matters and objects of the EP&A Act, including the reasons for the original decision, the principles of ecologically sustainable development (Sections 3 and 5) and advice from government agencies and local councils (Section 4).

The Department considers the modification would not significantly increase the impacts of the mines. Whitehaven is using larger trucks which has reduced the overall truck movements on the road since the development consents were granted and, even with the modifications, the combined heavy vehicle traffic would be substantially less than what was originally approved.

Amenity impacts from the modification would be minor as the increase in noise from the additional trucks would be less than 1 dB, which is inaudible to most people, and the haulage route is sealed and therefore there would be no appreciable additional dust from the additional trucks.

Impacts on the road network would also be minor as there would be no reduction in the level of service at intersections, the roads have adequate capacity to accommodate the traffic, and Whitehaven is required to make road maintenance contributions to the relevant council/s.

There would be no increase in greenhouse gas emissions compared to the approved project haulage given the overall reduction in truck movements and that there is no increase in ROM coal production or extension in mine life for any of the approved mining schedules.

The modification would allow Whitehaven to operate more efficiently and maximise the existing workforce and infrastructure at the CHPP. Accordingly, the Department considers that the proposed modifications can be approved as proposed. The Department has drafted instrument of modifications (Appendix C) and consolidated versions of the consents (Appendix D) for each mine.

7 Determination

It is recommended that the **Director – Resource Assessments**, as delegate of the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces:

- **considers** the findings and recommendations of this report;
- **determines** that the applications (SSD-7480-Mod-2, MP11_0047-Mod-11 and MP10_0015-Mod-5) fall within the scope of section 4.55(1A) of the EP&A Act;
- **forms the opinion** under section 7.17(2)(c) of the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* that a biodiversity development assessment report is not required to be submitted with this application as the modification would not increase the impact on biodiversity values on the site;
- **accepts and adopts** the findings and recommendations in this report as the reasons for making the decision to approve the modification;
- **modifies the consents** for the Vickery Extension Project (SSD-7480), Tarrawonga Coal Mine (MP11_0047) and Rocglen Extension Project (MP10_0015) as amended, subject to the conditions in the attached instrument of modification; and
- signs the attached instrument of modification (Appendix C).

Recommended by:



8.10.2025

Brittany Golding

A/Senior Environmental Assessment Officer
Resource Assessments

Recommended by:



8.10.2025

Rose-Anne Hawkeswood

Team Leader
Resource Assessments

The recommendation is **adopted/not adopted** by:



8.10.2025

Steve O'Donoghue

Director
Resource Assessments

Appendices

Appendix A – List of referenced documents

A1 – Modification report

A2 – Agency advice and council comments

A3 – Additional information

Vickery Extension Project: For all documents, refer to the Department’s website at:
<https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/mod-2-increase-2025-coal-haulage-limit>

Tarrawonga Coal Mine: For all documents, refer to the Department’s website at:
<https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/mod-11-increase-2025-coal-haulage-limit>

Rocglen Extension Project: For all documents, refer to the Department’s website at:
<https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/mod-5-removal-haulage-limit-condition>

Appendix B – Statutory considerations

Objects of the EP&A Act

A summary of the Department’s consideration of the relevant objects (found in section 1.3 of the EP&A Act) are provided in Table B1 below.

Table B1 | Objects of the EP&A Act and how they have been considered

Object	Consideration
(a) to promote the social and economic welfare of the community and a better environment by the proper management, development and conservation of the State’s natural and other resources,	• The modification would facilitate the transportation of ROM coal already approved to be extracted.
(b) to facilitate ecologically sustainable development by integrating relevant economic, environmental and social considerations in	• The Department’s assessment has sought to integrate all significant environmental, social and economic considerations. The Department considers that the modification can be carried out in an ecologically sustainable manner.

Object	Consideration
decision-making about environmental planning and assessment,	
(c) to promote the orderly and economic use and development of land,	• The modification would utilise existing public and private roads.
(d) to promote the delivery and maintenance of affordable housing,	• Not applicable.
(e) to protect the environment, including the conservation of threatened and other species of native animals and plants, ecological communities and their habitats,	• The modification would not impact biodiversity values.
(f) to promote the sustainable management of built and cultural heritage (including Aboriginal cultural heritage),	• The modification would not impact Aboriginal cultural heritage.
(g) to promote good design and amenity of the built environment,	• Not applicable.
(h) to promote the proper construction and maintenance of buildings, including the protection of the health and safety of their occupants,	• Not applicable.
(i) to promote the sharing of the responsibility for environmental planning and assessment between the different levels of government in the state,	• The Department has assessed the modification application in consultation with Narrabri Shire Council, Gunnedah Shire Council and other relevant NSW government agencies. • The Department has given consideration to the matters raised in its assessment.
(j) to provide increased opportunity for community participation in environmental planning and assessment.	• The Department did not publicly exhibit the modification, but the modification application was made available on the Department's website.

Appendix C – Instrument of modifications

Vickery Extension Project: Refer to the ‘Determination’ folder under the ‘Assessment’ tab on the Department’s website at: <https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/mod-2-increase-2025-coal-haulage-limit>

Tarrawonga Coal Mine: Refer to the ‘Determination’ folder under the ‘Assessment’ tab on the Department’s website at: <https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/mod-11-increase-2025-coal-haulage-limit>

Rocglen Extension Project: Refer to the ‘Determination’ folder under the ‘Assessment’ tab on the Department’s website at: <https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/mod-5-removal-haulage-limit-condition>

Appendix D – Consolidated consents

Vickery Extension Project: Refer to the ‘Determination’ folder under the ‘Assessment’ tab on the Department’s website at: <https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/mod-2-increase-2025-coal-haulage-limit>

Tarrawonga Coal Mine: Refer to the ‘Determination’ folder under the ‘Assessment’ tab on the Department’s website at: <https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/mod-11-increase-2025-coal-haulage-limit>

Rocglen Extension Project: Refer to the ‘Determination’ folder under the ‘Assessment’ tab on the Department’s website at: <https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/mod-5-removal-haulage-limit-condition>