This decision is made under sections 130(1) and 133(1) of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth)*. Note that section 134(1A) of the EPBC Act applies to this approval, which provides in general terms that if the approval holder authorises another person to undertake any part of the action, the approval holder must take all reasonable steps to ensure that the other person is informed of any conditions attached to this approval, and that the other person complies with any such condition.

### Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person to whom the approval is granted (approval holder)</th>
<th>Vickery Coal Pty Ltd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACN or ABN of approval holder</td>
<td>ACN: 626 224 495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>The extension of the open cut mining operations at the Vickery Coal Mine and related surface infrastructure and activities, 25 km north of Gunnedah, NSW (see EPBC Act referral 2016/7649 and the variations approved on 17 February 2017 and 17 July 2018).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Approval decision

My decision on whether or not to approve the taking of the action for the purposes of each controlling provision for the action is as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Controlling Provisions</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listed Threatened Species and Communities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 18</td>
<td>Approve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 18A</td>
<td>Approve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coal seam gas or large coal mining development impact on water resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 24D</td>
<td>Approve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 24E</td>
<td>Approve</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Period for which the approval has effect

This approval has effect until 31 December 2051

### Decision-maker

| Name and position | The Hon Sussan Ley MP  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minister for the Environment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>Leys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Date of decision | 15th September 2021 |
Conditions of approval

This approval is subject to the conditions under the EPBC Act as set out in ANNEXURE A.

ANNEXURE A – CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

Part A – Conditions specific to the action

Water Resources

The objective of Conditions 1 to 14 is to minimise the impacts of the action on a Water Resource.

1. For the protection of water resources, the approval holder must comply with State development consent conditions B39 to B54 and B101 to B106.

2. The approval holder must ensure that there is no adverse effect on the function of a water resource as a result of the action.

3. The approval holder must notify the Department in writing, within 2 business days, if an application to modify State development consent conditions B39 – B54 and B101-B106 is made.

4. The approval holder must notify the Department in writing, within 10 business days, where State development consent conditions B39 – B54 and B101-B106 have been modified.

5. The approval holder must include the following information in the Water Management Plan required by State development consent condition B53:
   a. management and mitigation strategies to minimise potential impacts to the EPBC Act listed Murray Cod (Maccullochella peelii).
   b. details of any chemical dust suppressants used. These details must include the chemicals proposed for use, typical application rates, and an assessment of the likelihood that the chemicals will enter the environment (e.g. soil, groundwater or surface water) and the potential persistence and toxicity to protected matters of these chemicals or their breakdown products. Furthermore, if data on chronic toxicity to aquatic organisms is not available in respect of any chemical proposed for use, the approval holder must include the results of direct toxicity assessments undertaken in accordance with the Australian and New Zealand guidelines for fresh and marine water quality, 2018 or any subsequent revision.

6. The approval holder must provide the Department with the final version of the Water Management Plan required by condition B53 of the State development consent within 10 business days of its approval by the NSW Planning Secretary.

7. The approval holder must notify the Department within 2 business days of any proposed changes to the final version of the Water Management Plan. If the NSW Planning Secretary approves a revised version of the Water Management Plan, the approval holder must provide the Department with the approved revised Water Management Plan within 10 business days of its approval by the NSW Planning Secretary.

8. In addition to the Groundwater Management Plan monitoring requirements specified in condition B53 of the State development consent, the approval holder must:
   a. Establish and maintain a network of groundwater monitoring bores designed to detect changes in groundwater levels and include bores that are co-located or paired with surface water monitoring sites to allow monitoring and analysis of groundwater-surface water interactions. These monitoring bores must be installed prior to the commencement of mining operations.
b. Monitor groundwater levels in each bore (required under condition 8.a) at least once every 3 months, starting within one week of the commencement of mining operations for the life of this approval.

c. Publish on the website all groundwater monitoring data from the bore network, updated at least once every 3 months to include the most recent readings available and maintain the data on the website for the life of this approval. The monitoring data must include hydrographs for the bore network and explain what the data means in relation to the groundwater performance measures specified in the State development consent.

9. The approval holder must submit performance criteria and limits, relevant to groundwater extraction impacts for the alluvial aquifer, for the Minister's approval. The submission of the performance criteria and limits must be accompanied by evidence-based justification of how they were derived from the results of monitoring, consider groundwater-surface water connectivity, and are suitable to demonstrate condition 2 is being achieved.

10. The approval holder must not commence groundwater extraction from the water supply borefield until the performance criteria and limits have been approved by the Minister in writing.

11. If, at any time during the period for which this approval has effect, the approval holder detects an exceedance of any approved limit required under condition 9 the approval holder must notify the Department of the exceedance within 2 business days of detecting the exceedance.

12. If, at any time during the period for which this approval has effect, the approval holder detects an exceedance of an approved limit required under condition 9, the approval holder must cease groundwater extraction from the water supply bore field within 2 business days.

13. If the approval holder has been required to cease groundwater extraction pursuant to condition 12, the approval holder must:
   a. provide information including monitoring data that identifies the likely cause of the exceedance of the approved limit;
   b. consider the effect of the current condition of the water resource on the utility of the water resource for associated users; and
   c. if the likely cause is identified as a component of the action, propose measures to mitigate and manage any impacts to any associated users, ensuring that the utility of the water resource for associated users is not effected.

14. The approval holder must not recommence groundwater extraction until the information required in condition 13 has been approved by the Minister in writing. The approval holder must implement the approved mitigation and management measures.

Listed Threatened Species

The objective of conditions 15 to 22 is to minimise the impacts and compensate for residual impacts of the action on EPBC Act listed threatened species.

15. Within the area designated ‘Approximate Extent of Vickery Extension Project (EPBC 2016-7649) footprint’ at Attachment A, the approval holder must not clear more than:
   a. 75.2 hectares of Regent Honeyeater (Anthochaera phrygia) habitat,
   b. 104.7 hectares of Swift Parrot (Lathamus discolor) habitat,
   c. 80.9 hectares of Koala (Phascolarctos cinereus) (combined populations of Queensland, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory) habitat.

Note: Habitat for the Regent Honeyeater, Swift Parrot and Koala is based on the NSW plant community types (PCTs) Attachment B and C.
16. The approval holder must comply with the State development consent conditions B56 - B67, and B101 - B106 (to the extent these conditions relate to EPBC Act listed threatened species).

17. The approval holder must notify the Department in writing, within 2 business days if they apply to modify State development consent conditions B56 – B67 and B101-B106.

18. The approval holder must notify the Department in writing, within 10 business days, where State development consent conditions B56 – B67 and B101-B106 have been modified.

19. To compensate for impacts on threatened species and communities listed in condition 15, the approval holder must comply with State development consent conditions B56 and B57 and must retire the biodiversity credits specified in table 10 and 11 of State development consent conditions B58 and B59.

20. The approval holder must publish a credit retirement report within 10 business days of retiring the credits on the approval holder’s website.

21. The approval holder must provide the Minister with a statement, prior to the commencement of the action validating that the approved land based offsets specified in Table 9 of the State development consent contain at least 293.9 ha of potential Regent Honeyeater (Anthochaera phrygia) habitat (the equivalent of 2087 species credits) and 112 ha of potential Koala (Phascolarctos cinereus) habitat (the equivalent of 795 species credits). The statement must be endorsed by an accredited assessor under the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 and must be published on the approval holder’s website.

Note: The equivalent credits in condition 21 were calculated in accordance with the Framework for Biodiversity Assessment of the NSW Biodiversity Offset Policy for Major Projects (OEH, 2014).

22. If the Minister is not satisfied that the approved land based offsets specified in Table 9 of the State development consent contain the habitat specified in condition 21, the approval holder may be required by the Minister to retire specified biodiversity credits under the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 within the timeframes specified in condition B58 of the State development consent.

Part B – Standard administrative conditions

Notification of date of commencement of the action

23. The approval holder must notify the Department in writing of the date of commencement of the action within 10 business days after the date of commencement of the action.

24. If the commencement of the action does not occur within 5 years from the date of this approval, then the approval holder must not commence the action without the prior written agreement of the Minister.

Compliance records

25. The approval holder must maintain accurate and complete compliance records.

26. If the Department makes a request in writing, the approval holder must provide electronic copies of compliance records to the Department within the timeframe specified in the request.
Submission and publication of plans

27. The approval holder must:

a. submit plans electronically to the Department;

b. unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the Minister:
   i. publish each plan on the website within 20 business days of the date the plan is approved by the Minister or of the date a revised action management plan is submitted to the Minister or the Department, unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the Minister;
   ii. publish the Water Management Plan on the website within 20 business days of the date the plan is approved by the NSW Planning Secretary;
   iii. exclude or redact sensitive ecological data from plans that are to be published on the website or provided to a member of the public; and
   iv. keep plans published on the website until the end date of this approval.

Annual compliance reporting

28. The approval holder must prepare a compliance report addressing compliance with each of the conditions of this approval, including implementation of any management plans and strategies required under the State development consent conditions that are referred to in this approval, at the end of March every year, and covering compliance for the previous calendar year or otherwise in accordance with another annual date that has been agreed to in writing by the Minister. The approval holder must:

a. publish each compliance report on the website within 20 business days following the end of March each year;

b. notify the Department by email that a compliance report has been published on the website and provide the weblink for the compliance report within 5 business days of the date of publication;

c. keep all compliance reports publicly available on the website until this approval expires;

d. exclude or redact sensitive ecological data from compliance reports prior to publishing each compliance report on the website; and

e. where any sensitive ecological data has been excluded from the version published, submit the full compliance report to the Department within 5 business days of publication.

Note: Compliance reports may be published on the Department's website.

Reporting non-compliance

29. The approval holder must notify the Department in writing of any: incident, or non-compliance with the conditions. The notification must be given as soon as practicable, and no later than two business days after becoming aware of the incident or non-compliance. The notification must specify:

a. any condition which is or may be in breach;

b. a short description of the incident and/or non-compliance; and
c. the location (including co-ordinates), date, and time of the incident and/or non-compliance. In the event the exact information cannot be provided, provide the best information available.

30. The approval holder must provide to the Department the details of any incident or non-compliance with the conditions as soon as practicable and no later than 10 business days after becoming aware of the incident or non-compliance, specifying:

a. any corrective action or investigation which the approval holder has already taken or intends to take in the immediate future;

b. the potential impacts of the incident or non-compliance; and

c. the method and timing of any remedial action that will be undertaken by the approval holder.

Independent audit

31. The approval holder must ensure that independent audits of compliance with the conditions are conducted as requested in writing by the Minister.

32. For each independent audit, the approval holder must:

a. provide the name and qualifications of the independent auditor and the draft audit criteria to the Department;

b. only commence the independent audit once the audit criteria have been approved in writing by the Department; and

c. submit an audit report to the Department within the timeframe specified in the approved audit criteria.

33. The approval holder must publish the audit report on the website within 10 business days of receiving the Department's approval of the audit report and keep the audit report published on the website until the end date of this approval.

Completion of the action

34. The approval holder must comply with condition A7\(^1\) in Schedule 2 of the State development consent.

35. Within 20 business days after the completion of the action, the approval holder must notify the Department in writing and provide completion data.

Changes to State development consent

36. The approval holder must notify the Department in writing of any proposed change to the State development consent that may relate to protected matters within 2 business days of formally proposing a change and within 5 business days of becoming aware of any proposed change.

37. The approval holder must notify the Department in writing of any change to the State development consent conditions that may relate to protected matters, within 10 business days of a change to conditions being finalised.

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\(^1\) Condition A7 in Schedule 2 states that mining operations may be carried out on the site until 12 August 2045.
Part C - Definitions

In these conditions, except where contrary intention is expressed, the following definitions are used:

**Action** means the Vickery Extension Project, Gunnedah, NSW (EPBC 2016/7649) as described in the NSW Assessment Report, the referral under the EPBC Act and the two variation requests dated 17 February 2017 and 17 July 2018 respectively.

**Adverse effect** means the occurrence of impacts greater than those predicted in the assessment documentation and is represented by the exceedance of an approved limit required under condition 9 of this approval.

**Approval holder** means the person to whom the approval is granted as identified on the approval notice for EPBC 2016/7649, or to whom the approval is transferred under section 145B of the EPBC Act, or a person who may take the action in accordance with section 133(2A) of the EPBC Act.

**Approved disturbance area** means the area defined as the “Approved disturbance area” in Schedule 1 of the State development consent.

**Aquatic GDE** means groundwater dependent ecosystems dependent on the surface expression of groundwater, including:
- River baseflow systems, aquatic and riparian ecosystems that exist in or adjacent to streams (including the hyporheic zone (subsurface interface between surface and groundwater bodies)) which are fed by groundwater; and
- Wetlands (aquatic communities and fringing vegetation dependent on groundwater-fed lakes and wetlands), including palustrine (non-tidal wetlands dominated by vegetation) and lacustrine (lake) wetlands that receive groundwater discharge, and can include spring and swamp ecosystems.

**Assessment documentation** means the documents listed in condition A2(c) of the State development consent.

**Associated User** means groundwater supply bores, aquatic GDEs, terrestrial GDEs and subterranean GDEs.

**Business day** means a day that is not a Saturday, a Sunday or a public holiday in the state or territory of the action.

**Clearing** means the cutting down, felling, thinning, logging, removing, killing, destroying, poisoning, ringbarking, uprooting or burning of vegetation within the approved disturbance area.

**Commencement of the action** means the first instance of any specified activity associated with the action including clearing and construction. Commencement of the action does not include:

i. pre-clearance surveys or monitoring programs;

ii. installation of signage and/or temporary fencing to prevent unapproved use of the project area;

iii. protection of environmental and property assets from fire, weeds and pests, including erection of temporary fencing, and use of existing surface access tracks;

iv. upgrades, diversions, removal or installation of utilities;

v. installation of temporary site facilities (including temporary roads, offices, toilets and laydown facilities) for persons undertaking pre-commencement activities so long as these are located where they have no impact on the protected matters;

vi. geotechnical investigations, site surveying activities and geological exploration drilling.
Completion data means an environmental report and spatial data clearly detailing how the conditions of this approval have been met. The Department’s preferred spatial data format is shapefile.

Completion of the action means all specified activities associated with the action have permanently ceased.

Compliance records means all documentation or other material in whatever form required to demonstrate compliance with the conditions of approval in the approval holder’s possession or that are within the approval holder’s power to obtain lawfully.

Compliance reports means written reports:

i. providing accurate and complete details of compliance, incidents, and non-compliance with the conditions and the plans;

ii. consistent with the Department’s Annual Compliance Report Guidelines (2014);

iii. include a shapefile of any clearance of any protected matters, or their habitat, undertaken within the relevant 12 month period; and

iv. annexing a schedule of all plans prepared and in existence in relation to the conditions during the relevant 12 month period.

Construction means the erection of a building or structure that is or is to be fixed to the ground and wholly or partially fabricated on-site; the alteration, maintenance, repair or demolition of any building or structure; preliminary site preparation work which involves breaking of the ground (including pile driving); the laying of pipes and other prefabricated materials in the ground, and any associated excavation work; but excluding the activities that do not constitute commencement of the action.

Department means the Australian Government agency responsible for administering the EPBC Act.


EPBC Act means the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth).

EPBC Act listed threatened species and communities: Regent Honeyeater (Anthochaera phrygia), Swift Parrot (Lathamus discolor) and Koala (Phascolarctos cinereus) (combined populations of Queensland, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory).

Function means the ecosystem components, processes and benefits or services that characterise the associated user including support for biological diversity or species composition.

Impact (verb) means to cause any measurable direct or indirect disturbance or harmful change as a result of any activity associated with the action. Impact/s (noun) means any measurable direct or indirect disturbance or harmful change as a result of any activity associated with the action.

Incident means any event which has the potential to, or does, impact on one or more protected matter(s) other than as authorised by this approval.


Limit/s means a specified numerical value for the performance criteria.
Listed threatened species: Regent Honeyeater (*Anthochaera phrygia*), Swift Parrot (*Lathamus discolor*) and Koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) (combined populations of Queensland, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory).

**Mining operations** means the carrying out of mining, including the extraction, processing, stockpiling and transportation of coal on the site and the associated removal, storage and/or emplacement of vegetation, topsoil, overburden and reject material.

**Minister** means the Australian Government Minister administering the **EPBC Act** including any delegate thereof.

**NSW performance criteria** means as specified in the approved Water Management Plan required under condition B53 of the **State development consent**.

**Performance criteria** means specific parameters, associated with and relevant to the **function** of a **water resource** that will be monitored to demonstrate that the outcome of no **adverse effect** is being achieved, measured at a specific time and place.

**Performance measure** means as specified in Table 8 of the **State development consent** and as defined in the Water Management **Plan** approved by the NSW Government.

**Plan(s)** means any of the documents required to be prepared, approved by the **Minister**, implemented by the approval holder and/or published on the **website** in accordance with these conditions (includes action management plans and/or strategies).

**Protected matter** means a matter protected under a controlling provision in Part 3 of the **EPBC Act** for which this approval has effect.

**Sensitive ecological data** means data as defined in the Australian Government Department of the Environment (2016) *Sensitive Ecological Data – Access and Management Policy V1.0*.

**Shapefile** means location and attribute information of the **action** provided in an Esri shapefile format. Shapefiles must contain `.shp`, `.shx`, `.dbf` files and a `.prj` file that specifies the projection/geographic coordinate system used. Shapefiles must also include an `.xml` metadata file that describes the shapefile for discovery and identification purposes.

**State development consent** means the Development Consent issued by the Independent Planning Commission of New South Wales for application number SSD-7480 dated 12 August 2020.

**Subterranean GDEs** means groundwater dependent ecosystems partially or wholly dependent on aquifer ecosystems, including stygofauna.

**Suitably qualified expert** means a person who has professional qualifications, training, skills and/or experience related to the nominated subject matter and can give authoritative independent assessment, advice and analysis on performance relative to the subject matter using the relevant protocols, standards, methods and/or literature.

**Terrestrial GDEs** means land-based groundwater dependent ecosystems that are partially or wholly dependent on the subsurface presence of groundwater.

**Water supply bore field** means the water supply bore field identified in Attachment E.

**Water Resource** has the same meaning as in the Commonwealth **Water Act 2007**.

**Website** means a set of related web pages located under a single domain name attributed to the approval holder and available to the public.

**Wetland/s** means land intermittently or permanently inundated with water that is usually slow moving or stationary, shallow, can be fresh, brackish or saline, and where the inundation affects the plant and animal communities present and the type and productivity of soil.
Attachment A - Commonwealth areas within the action’s footprint (Mine Site view)
Attachment A - Commonwealth areas within the action’s footprint (Rail Spur view)
Attachment B - Plant Community Types within the action area (project mining area).
Attachment C - Plant Community Types within the action area (indicative rail spur area).