

02 July 2021

Juliana McCosker  
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**Department of Environment and Science**  
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Dear Juliana

### **EPML00418713 Information Request Response**

Monto Coal 2 Pty Ltd (Monto Coal) submitted an application to amend Environmental Authority (EA) EPML00418713 for the Monto Coal Project (MCP) on 22 February 2021 to the Department of Environment and Science (DES). The purpose of the EA amendment is to add Mining Lease (ML) 80175, add Environmentally Relevant Activities (ERAs), and amend several conditions. An Information Request was received by Monto Coal on 12 May 2021, with a due date of 12 November 2021.

DES's comments and requested actions have been duplicated below, and responses have been provided to each.

## **Environmentally Relevant Activities (ERAs)**

### **Matter of Interest 1**

*Ancillary Activity 62 – Resource recovery and transfer facility operation 1: Operating a facility for receiving and sorting, dismantling, baling or temporarily storing--; (d) category 1 regulated waste.*

#### **DES Comment**

*ERA 62 is likely not applicable to the Monto Coal Project (hereon referred to as 'the Project') as the activities authorised and those proposed to be carried out on-site do not include the receipt of waste generated off-site.*

*If the project does intend on accepting waste from external sources, it may be liable to pay the waste levy under the Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011.*

#### **Requested Action/s**

*Confirm if ERA 62 is applicable to the site.*

*Where it is believed ERA 62 is applicable, please clarify the intentions behind the addition of ERA 62, confirm if the Project will be accepting waste generated off-site and provide details as to:*

- *The entities from which waste will be received;*
- *A description of waste (e.g. regulated/general, putrescible, etc.) including the weight and volume to be received;*

- *How this waste will be stored to prevent environmental harm; and*
- *If this waste will be disposed of on-site, how will it be disposed of so as to prevent environmental harm.*

### **Monto Coal Response**

This was included in error, and it is requested that it be removed from the additional ERAs to be included in the MCP EA. The MCP does not propose to receive any off-site waste.

## **Matter of Interest 2**

*Ancillary Activity 31 – Mineral Processing 2*

### **DES Comment**

*Pre-approved ERA 31 is currently absent from permit's list of approved ERAs.*

*As per the explanatory notes of the Environmental Protection Act 1994 where multiple activities are undertaken under one environmental authority, the relevant ERA(s) from schedule 2 of the EP Reg is used to describe the activities which are authorised. This then makes clear in the event of a change in an operation, when an amendment application must be made and when conditions are needed for the prescribed ERA. Further the inclusion of an ERA should occur regardless of whether the activity is being undertaken as part of a resource activity or not.*

*Approved ERAs (ancillary or otherwise) to be listed on the corresponding permit. Further, if a particular ERA has the highest annual fee of all the approved activities on the permit, that annual fee is charged irrespective of whether an operator has commenced undertaking that particular activity.*

*NOTE: The EA holder may still be eligible for a reduced annual fee for ERA 31 until such time the activity is carried out. The EA holder should approach PaL regarding this matter.*

### **Requested Action/s**

*Acknowledge ERA 31 – Mineral Processing will be included on EA EPML00418713.*

*Clarify the precise threshold under which ERA 31 will be carried out.*

### **Monto Coal Response**

Acknowledged. Threshold will be as per 2(b) (>100,000t).

## **Environmental Values (EVs)**

### **Matter of Interest 1**

*Acoustics (Noise and Vibration) and Air (Dust)*

### **DES Comment**

*The proposed amendment will expand mining activities northward to be closer in proximity to sensitive receptors identified for previous approval of activities on ML80101.*

*However, the impacts to EVs of noise, vibration and air at these sensitive receptors due to the proposed expansion are unclear.*

**Requested Action/s**

*Identify the sensitive receptors which will become closer in proximity to the Project.*

*Confirm if the Project will remain compliant with the existing limits and associated conditions of EA EPML00418713 for EVs of Acoustics and Air.*

*Provide confirmation for example, via modelling which demonstrates the level of impact to sensitive receptors under the proposed amendment. Modelling should describe the individual potential impacts of noise, vibration and dust at each sensitive receptor.*

**Monto Coal Response**

The sensitive receptors map (Figure 15 in the supporting document) has been revised to identify which receptors will be located in closer proximity to the MCP as a result of the addition of ML 80175 and is presented below.

The majority of mining operations at the MCP will be undertaken within the original ML80101 footprint, with ML 80175 only containing a small waste rock dump, a sediment dam, and a northern extension of the “pre-existing” pit. The initial box-cut and mining areas within the MCP will be within the previously approved ML 80101. Advancement of the pit and active mining within ML 80175 is not planned to be undertaken until year five (5) of the operation at the earliest, giving Monto Coal at least four (4) years of operational monitoring data collection, refinement of mitigation measures and ongoing community engagement to ensure that the EA conditions can be achieved and impacts on sensitive receptors are minimised.

Modelling of noise, vibration and dust has not been undertaken for the addition of ML 80175, as it would not provide any additional regulatory, monitoring or management outcomes. This is primarily because monitoring trigger limits at the location of a receptor are based on the receptor itself, which remains unchanged regardless of the mining activity. For example, a noise limit at a homestead remains applicable (based on persons living there) regardless of the where a mining activity is being undertaken.

Additionally, the potential impacts associated with activities within ML 80175 are not materially greater (in terms of generating noise, dust or vibration) than those already approved to be undertaken on ML 80101 by the EA.

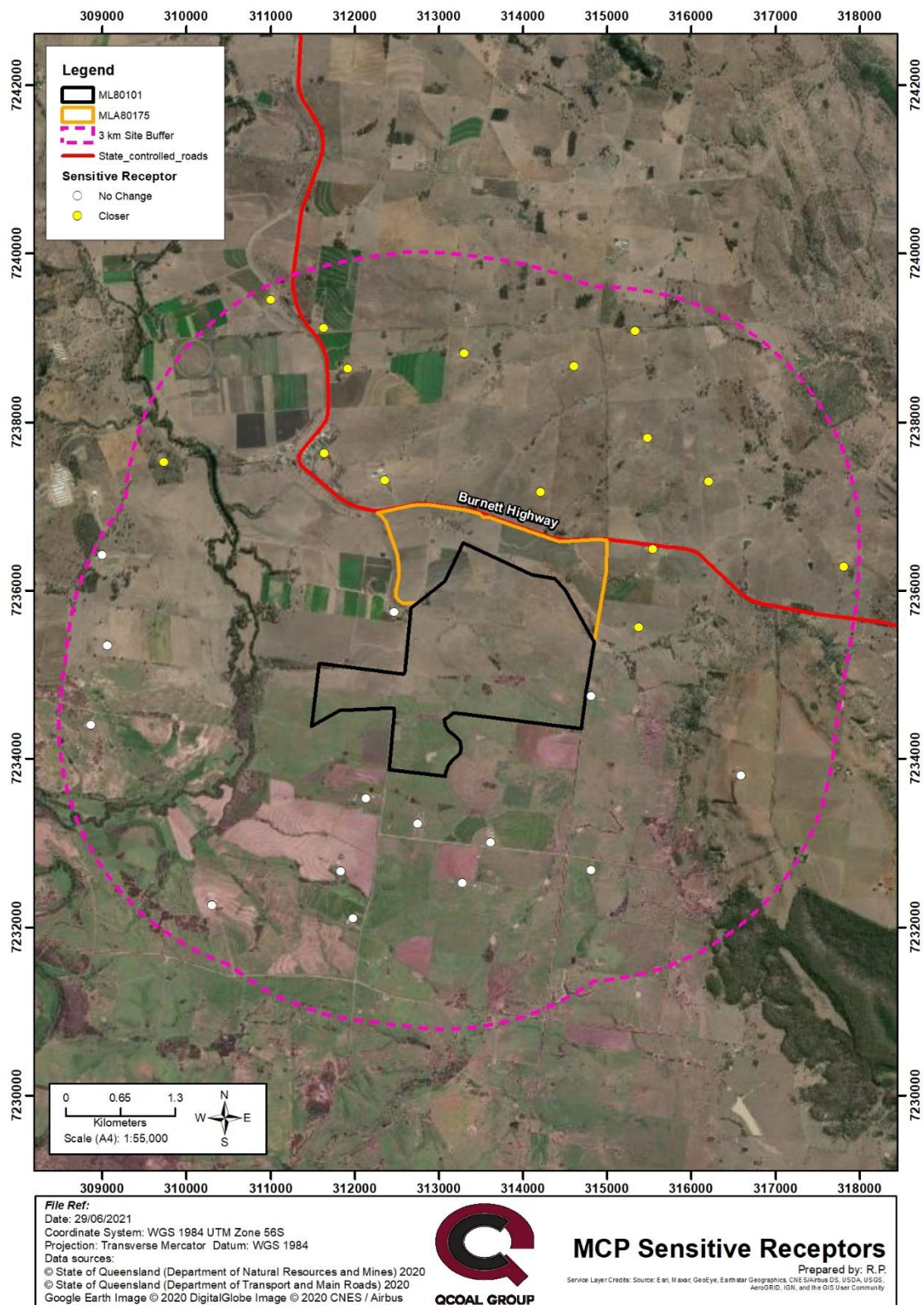
While the existing EA does include conditions and limits relating to noise, dust, vibration and air blast overpressure, those conditions do not represent the current best practice EA conditioning as is present in the Model Mining Conditions. As such the proposed adoption of the current Model Mining Conditions represents a more conservative approach and a more “receptor specific” basis for trigger limits.

Monto Coal is committed to implement best practice noise, vibration and dust mitigation measures and technologies at the MCP, including:

- **Vibration:** The main source of vibration at the MCP will be from blasting. Monto Coal will specifically design each blast to direct and minimise vibration, in consideration of the sensitive receptors and EA conditions.
- **Dust:** The main source of dust at the MCP will be from excavation and haulage of waste rock. Dust emissions from the MCP will be controlled through the use of dust suppression during operations, through the provision of mobile water carts, and permanent dust suppression systems for stockpiles and fixed plant.

- Noise: Operations at the MCP will be structured to minimise noise at sensitive receivers in consideration of the sensitive receptors and EA conditions, through mine planning, selection of mobile and fixed plant, and the adoption of noise attenuation where required.

Community consultation will be ongoing during construction and operations at the MCP via a community consultation program. A regular community consultation forum will give the local community an opportunity to provide input and to raise any concerns regarding noise, dust, vibration, or other issues, and provide Monto Coal with the opportunity to improve operations where practicable.





## Matter of Interest 2

*Air – Environmental objective 1 (EO1) and Performance outcome 1.2 (PO1.2)*

See Schedule 8, Part 1, 2 and 3 of the Environmental Protection Act 2019 for more details regarding Environmental objectives and Performance outcomes.

### DES Comment

*The Project must continue to implement effective environmental strategies with regards to Air, including all of the following performance outcomes:*

- a) fugitive emissions of contaminants from storage, handling and processing of materials and transporting materials within the site are prevented or minimised;*
- b) implement contingency measures that will prevent or minimise adverse effects of dust on the environment from unplanned emissions and shut-down and start-up emissions of dust to air.*
- c) releases of contaminants to the atmosphere for dispersion will be managed to prevent or minimise adverse effects on environmental values.*

### Requested Action/s

*Confirm that the existing mitigation and management measures to be implemented will be able to meet the listed performance outcomes with the expanded scale of the Project.*

*Where the existing mitigation and management measures cannot achieve the listed performance outcomes, provide details of how additional and/or modified mitigation and management measures will be implemented to meet these performance outcomes.*

### Monto Coal Response

Monto Coal expects that the existing mitigation and management measures to be implemented, will be able to meet the listed performance outcomes. The intensity and impact of the mining operation itself is not proposed to increase with the inclusion of ML 80175, only the footprint of activities. This is evidenced by the fact that the ROM coal extraction rate will not increase as a result of this amendment.

## Matter of Interest 3

*Water (Surface Water, Groundwater and Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems)*

### DES Comment

*The proposed amendment will expand mining activities northward to be closer in proximity to sensitive receptors identified for previous approval of activities on ML80101.*

*However, the impacts to EVs of surface water, groundwater and groundwater dependent ecosystems at these sensitive receptors due to the proposed expansion are unclear.*

### Requested Action/s

*Identify all potential sensitive receptors now in closer proximity to the Project.*

*Confirm if the Project will remain compliant with the existing limits and associated conditions of EA EPML00418713 for EVs of Water.*

*Provide confirmation for example, via modelling which demonstrates the level of impact to sensitive receptors under the proposed amendment. Modelling should describe the individual impacts to surface water, groundwater and groundwater dependent ecosystems.*

### Monto Coal Response

Potential impacts to surface water, groundwater and groundwater dependent ecosystems are detailed specifically in Sections 3.1 and 3.3 of the supporting document, and summarised below:

- Groundwater
  - Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems (GDEs): As detailed in Section 3.3.4 of the supporting document, ML 80175 is located further from the Abercorn Springs (which at 17km to the south, is the closest identified GDE to the MCP, as shown in Figure 12) than the existing ML 80101.
  - Groundwater Users: As potential groundwater impacts on ML 80175 are restricted to the Mulgildie Coal Measures, and there are no local users of water from this aquifer due to poor water quality and yield, there are no sensitive receptors from a groundwater perspective.
- Surface Water
  - As detailed in the supporting document and shown in Figure 3 of the supporting document, a number of ephemeral surface drainage lines run east-west through both ML 80101 and ML 80175, and confluence in a common receiving environment (i.e. Three Moon Creek). The drainage lines within and downstream of ML 80175 do not pass within close proximity to any sensitive receptor before entering Three Moon Creek. Sensitive receptors are unlikely to rely on the surface water drainage lines within and downstream of the MCP to any significant extent given their highly ephemeral nature and limited downstream reach length (<2km) before they confluence with Three Moon Creek.

While the existing EA does include conditions and limits relating to groundwater and surface water, those conditions do not represent the current best practice EA conditioning as is present in the Model Mining Conditions. As such the proposed adoption of the current Model Mining Conditions represents a more conservative approach and a more “receptor specific” basis for trigger limits (including ML 80175). Monto Coal is committed to implement best practice water and groundwater

management at the MCP and is comfortable that the MCP will be able to be operated in compliance with the amended EA.

## Matter of Interest 4

*Water – EO2 and PO2.2*

### DES Comment

*The Project must continue to implement effective environmental strategies with regards to Water, including all the following performance outcomes:*

- a) the storage and handling of contaminants will include effective means of secondary containment to prevent or minimise releases to the environment from spillage or leaks;*
- b) contingency measures will prevent or minimise adverse effects on the environment due to unplanned releases or discharges of contaminants to water;*
- c) the activity will be managed so that stormwater contaminated by the activity that may cause an adverse effect on an environmental value will not leave the site without prior treatment;*
- d) the disturbance of any acid sulfate soil, or potential acid sulfate soil, will be managed to prevent or minimise adverse effects on environmental values;*
- e) acid producing rock will be managed to ensure that the production and release of acidic waste is prevented or minimised, including impacts during operation and after the environmental authority has been surrendered;*
- f) any discharge to water or a watercourse or wetland will be managed so that there will be no adverse effects due to the altering of existing flow regimes for water or a watercourse or wetland;*
- g) for a petroleum activity, the activity will be managed in a way that is consistent with the coal seam gas water management policy, including the prioritisation hierarchy for managing and using coal seam gas water and the prioritisation hierarchy for managing saline waste;*
- h) the activity will be managed so that adverse effects on environmental values are prevented or minimised.*

### Requested Action/s

*Confirm that the existing mitigation and management measures to be implemented will be able to meet the listed performance outcomes with the expanded scale of the Project.*

*Where the existing mitigation and management measures cannot achieve the listed performance outcomes, provide details of what additional and/or modified mitigation and management measures will be implemented to meet these performance outcomes.*

### Monto Coal Response

Water management on site will be undertaken in accordance with a Water Management Plan (WMP). The requirement for a WMP is conditioned in the existing EA for ML 80101 and is also a requirement of the Model Mining Conditions proposed for the amended MCP EA. The WMP is required to outline mitigation and management measures, which would address the above listed performance outcomes. The WMP is also required to be reviewed annually for continued suitability and adequacy.



The existing mitigation and management measures for the MCP are expected to meet the required performance outcomes.

## Matter of Interest 5

*Groundwater (Abercorn Springs)*

### DES Comment

*The Department notes that Figure 10 – Cross-section of Regional Stratigraphy of the supporting information 'EA Amendment Supporting Document EPML00418713' depicts the Mulgildie Coal Measures overlying the Hutton Sandstone, Evergreen Formation and the Precipice Sandstone.*

### Requested Action/s

*Confirm if mining activities within the Mulgildie Coal Measures are expected to impact the quantity and quality of groundwater within the underlying aquifers.*

*If impacts are expected to occur to these aquifers, also confirm whether the Abercorn Springs will be impacted and the nature of the potential impacts.*

### Monto Coal Response

Mining activities at the MCP will target the Mulgildie Coal Measures, with no mining proposed below this formation. Therefore, direct impacts (e.g. excavation of the aquifer formation itself) or indirect impacts (e.g. disturbance of confining layers or aquitards) to groundwater within underlying aquifers are not considered a material risk. As stated in Section 3.3.5 of the supporting document, the addition of ML80175 to the MCP mining activities will not increase the risk of impact to the quantity and quality of groundwater within the underlying aquifers.

Potential impacts to Abercorn Springs are addressed specifically in Section 3.3.4 of the supporting document, and as no disturbance is to be undertaken in the underlying Hutton Sandstone or Evergreen Formation (the source of water for these springs), there is no risk of impact to these springs from activities undertaken on ML 80175 or ML 80101. The significant distance (17Km) between the MCP and the Abercorn Springs further makes the likelihood of any impacts negligible.

## Matter of Interest 6

*Groundwater – EO4 and PO4.2*

### DES Comment

*The Project must continue to implement effective environmental strategies with regards to Groundwater, including the following performance outcome:*

- a) *The activity will be managed to prevent or minimise adverse effects on groundwater or any associated surface ecological systems.*

### Requested Action/s

*Confirm that the existing mitigation and management measures to be implemented will be able to meet the listed performance outcomes with the expanded scale of the Project.*

*Where the existing mitigation and management measures cannot achieve the listed performance outcomes, provide details of how additional or altered mitigation and management measures will be implemented to meet these performance outcomes.*

**Monto Coal Response**

Potential impacts to groundwater or any associated surface ecological systems are addressed in Section 3.3.5 of the supporting document. Potential impacts to groundwater are limited to the Mulgildie Coal Measures aquifer (which, due to water quality and yield does not have any local users), and the alluvial aquifer (which is not likely to be impacted as it is typically associated with Three Moon Creek to the west of the MCP and not within the area impacted by the mining activities).

The existing mitigation and management measures are expected to meet the listed performance outcomes.

**Matter of Interest 7**

*Waste – EO6 and PO6.1*

**DES Comment**

*The Project must continue to implement effective environmental strategies with regards to Waste, including all the following performance outcomes:*

- a) waste generated, transported or received is managed in accordance with the waste and resource management hierarchy in the Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011;*
- b) if waste is disposed of, it is disposed of in a way that prevents or minimises adverse effects on environmental values*

**Requested Action/s**

*Confirm that the existing mitigation and management measures to be implemented will be able to meet the listed performance outcomes with the expanded scale of the Project.*

*Where the existing mitigation and management measures cannot achieve the listed performance outcomes, provide details of how additional and/or modified mitigation and management measures will be implemented to meet these performance outcomes.*

**Monto Coal Response**

As per Section 3.6 of the supporting document, prior to the commencement of construction and active mining operations at the MCP, a Waste Management Plan will be developed. The Waste Management Plan will address the requirements of the relevant legislation and the conditions of the EA, which will ensure waste is managed in accordance with the listed performance outcomes. The content required for the Waste Management Plan is conditioned in the existing EA; however the proposed Model Mining Conditions include more detailed content requirements for a Waste Management Plan and are considered a more conservative set of conditions.

## Land Use Assessment

### Matter of Interest 1

*Site Suitability – EO1 and EO1.2*

#### DES Comment

*The Project must continue to implement effective environmental strategies with regards to site suitability, including all the following performance outcomes:*

- a) *critical design requirements will prevent emissions having an irreversible or widespread impact on adjacent areas.*

#### Requested Action/s

*Confirm that the existing mitigation and management measures to be implemented will be able to meet the listed performance outcomes with the expanded scale of the Project.*

*Where the existing mitigation and management measures cannot achieve the listed performance outcomes, provide details of how additional and/or modified mitigation and management measures will be implemented to meet these performance outcomes.*

#### Monto Coal Response

Baseline impacts were assessed during the initial approval process for ML 80101, and the inclusion of ML 80175 does not represent a significant change to the activities proposed. Specifically, while the area covered by the MCP with the addition of ML80175 will increase, the intensity, nature and general location of the operation will not change. Therefore, the potential impacts to adjacent areas are not expected to differ from those already considered in the original EA application and approved in the current MCP EA.

### Matter of Interest 2

*Location on Site – EO2 and PO2.2*

#### DES Comment

*The Project must continue to implement effective environmental strategies with regards to the location on site where activities are carried-out, including all the following performance outcomes:*

- a) *the activity, and components of the activity, are carried out on the site in a way that prevents or minimises adverse effects on the use of surrounding land and allows for effective management of the environmental impacts of the activity;*

#### Requested Action/s

*Confirm that the existing mitigation and management measures to be implemented will be able to meet the listed performance outcomes with the expanded scale of the Project.*

*Where the existing mitigation and management measures cannot achieve the listed performance outcomes, provide details of how additional and/or modified mitigation and management measures will be implemented to meet these performance outcomes.*

### **Monto Coal Response**

Impacts to land and land use are detailed in Section 3.4 of the supporting document, The land-use surrounding the MCP is generally agriculture, this usage will not be impacted by the mining activities.

Other potential indirect impacts to surrounding land use (i.e. surface water, groundwater, acoustic, and air) are also detailed within the supporting document, and discussed in the responses to the Environmental Values Matters of Interest above. The existing mitigation and management measures approved for ML 80101 and those proposed for ML 80175 are expected to achieve the listed performance outcome.

### **Matter of Interest 3**

*Critical Design Requirements – E03 and PO3.2*

#### **DES Comment**

*The Project must continue to implement effective environmental strategies with regards to the critical design requirements for activities to be carried-out, including all the following performance outcomes:*

- a) all storage provided for hazardous contaminants includes secondary containment to prevent or minimise releases to the environment from spillage or leaks;*
- b) regulated structures comply with the 'Manual for assessing consequence categories and hydraulic performance of structures' published by the department;*
- c) provide containers for the storage of hazardous contaminants that are secured to prevent the removal of the containers from the site by a flood event;*
- d) the design of the facility prevents or minimises the production of hazardous contaminants and waste;*
- e) if the production of hazardous contaminants and waste is not prevented or minimised under paragraph (d)—the design of the facility contains and treats hazardous contaminants rather than releasing them.*

#### **Requested Action/s**

*Confirm that the existing mitigation and management measures to be implemented will be able to meet the listed performance outcomes with the expanded scale of the Project.*

*Where the existing mitigation and management measures cannot achieve the listed performance outcomes, provide details of how additional and/or modified mitigation and management measures will be implemented to meet these performance outcomes.*

### **Monto Coal Response**

The listed performance outcomes are proposed to be addressed in the MCP Environmental Authority as follows:

- a) Condition H5 of the Model Mining Conditions (specified within the “How do I comply” explanatory notes) details how contaminants are to be bundled.
- b) Monto Coal proposes that a Regulated Structures schedule be included in the Monto Coal EA (an example can be seen in Drake Mine EA EPML00393013 Schedule I: Dams and Levees).

- c) The Mine Infrastructure area and proposed tailing storage facilities are not in an area that is prone to flood impacts (including 1,000 year ARI events), therefore there is no risk of the removal of stored contaminants by flood events.
- d) Storage of hazardous chemicals/contaminants at the MCP will generally be confined to the MIA area, and will predominantly be limited to diesel, oil and grease, and other chemicals required for the operations and maintenance of fixed and mobile plant, as well as explosives used in the mining operations (which will be stored in a separate designated area with the required buffer zones in place). Storages and bunding for these hazardous chemicals and products will be designed in accordance with the relevant legislation, Australian Standards, Guidelines and industry best practice.

Hazardous and contaminated waste products generated from the mining activities are proposed to be managed via a Waste Management Plan, conditions for which are included in the existing EA and which are conditioned in further detail in the Model Mining Conditions which Monto Coal has proposed be adopted for the amended MCP EA.

- e) Not applicable based on d).

Please contact Ryan Pane on 0436 670 311 or email [rpane@qcoal.com.au](mailto:rpane@qcoal.com.au) with any queries.

Yours sincerely



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