



White Mining Limited

A.C.N. 009 713 893

Ashton Coal Project
73 Glennies Creek Road
P.O. Box 699
Singleton NSW 2330

Telephone: (02) 6576 1111
Facsimile: (02) 6576 1122
Mobile: 0419 622 155
E-Mail: icallow@whitemining.com.au



31 May 2002

Planning NSW
Development and Infrastructure Assessment
Level 4
20 Lee Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Attention: Mr M. Andrews

RE: Proposed Ashton Coal Project – Northern Woodland Remnant

Dear Matt,

We refer to your letter dated 29 May 2002 regarding the proposed conservation of the remnant vegetation adjacent to the eastern limit of the open cut.

We understand that the Department wishes us to review the proposed mine plan in order to conserve a 200 metre wide strip between the Main Northern Railway and Glennies Creek Road on the basis that:

- The vegetation within this area is of regional significance
- It may support the Grey-crowned Babbler, the Glossy Black-Cockatoo and the Masked Owl
- It could provide a fauna corridor between the Camberwell Common, Glennies Creek and Betty's Creek
- Part of the Common is recognised to be of natural heritage importance to the residents of Camberwell Village.

The following response assesses the mining, economic, environmental and ecological impacts of the proposal as we understand it.

1. Mining

A parcel of land measuring approximately 600 metres x 200 metres is contiguous with the eastern limit of the proposed open cut. This area contains (essential) recoverable gravels that will be utilised for road and rail formations as well as for the emplacement of

SYDNEY: Level 14, 213 Miller Street, North Sydney NSW 2060 - Ph:(02) 9922 3777 Fax: (02) 9923 2427
BRISBANE: Level 6, 77 Eagle Street, Brisbane QLD 4000 – Ph: (07) 3229 0200 Fax: (07) 3221 2817



overburden. The environmental bund, approximately 15 metres high, will be provided along the southern extremity of the area to limit visual, noise and lighting impacts on the village. This undertaking was given to the village residents at the first community meeting.

In order to accommodate this proposal, provision would need to be made for a 30 metre wide roadway along the top of the eastern highwall of the open cut. A 60 metre wide roadway progressing in an easterly direction from the northern ramp would also be necessary to provide for the transport of overburden to the eastern emplacement area. The viable conservation area would be about 500 metres x 200 metres or 10 Hectares. It would not be possible to place the earth bund wall in this area as the DMR requirements for final batter slopes are 10 degrees (approximately 1 in 6). This would reduce the area by a further 180 metres x 200 metres or 3.6 Hectares.

The amount of overburden displaced as a result of this proposal is contained within the vertical section above the proposed conservation area, but also within the batters that need to be laid back at 10 degrees from it.

The displaced volume is in the order of 6,250,000 cubic metres.

2. Alternate Areas for the Disposal of Overburden

No areas suitable for overburden emplacement were identified outside of the Ashton Lease as safety considerations preclude the haulage of such a large quantity of overburden on public roads. The area immediately to the north of Ashton is already committed to overburden disposal by the Glendell Project via an existing development consent. No vacant emplacement areas are available outside the area of the Development Application.

Several alternate emplacement areas were identified within the DA area. These are detailed on the attached plan. Enlargement of the Western Emplacement Area is the most obvious choice, followed by an area at the southern extremity of Longwall Panels 2, 3 & 4. An area to the east of the Western Emplacement Area (just south of the New England Highway) had some potential, but has already been committed as a land swap for the Travelling Stock Route and portion of the Temporary Common. Likewise consideration was given to the potential to utilise this material to fill the final void of the open cut, but the available quantity is less than 0.75 M cubic metres and the space would not be available for 21 years.

Early community meetings and individual face to face discussions with residents of the village discerned some problems with noise, dust and the maintenance of the visual amenity associated with the Western Emplacement Area from the village. The design submitted in the EIS ensured that it was screened by and would not be higher than the natural ridgeline at RL 110. This meant the area was reduced in recognition of these concerns, with the capacity



of the emplacement area limited to 5.8 M cubic metres. Archaeological investigations identified aboriginal sites near the oxbow in Bowmans Creek and commitments have been given to NPWS and the aboriginal community to preserve and protect this area. The footprint available for the emplacement area is therefore already smaller than originally proposed.

An alternate design for the Western Emplacement Area has been prepared based on the above footprint, with the maximum height of the dump increased to RL 140. The capacity of this dump is in the order of 8.0 M cubic metres, therefore accommodating about 2.2 M cubic metres displaced from the Eastern Emplacement Area.

This increased height will impact on the visual amenity of the residents of Camberwell and will remove planned controls to address noise, dust and lighting emissions from the site.

The alternate design also included an emplacement area at the southern end of longwall panels 2, 3 & 4. This area can accommodate the remaining 4.1 M cubic metres of overburden, but will of necessity encroach onto the floodplain associated with Bowmans Creek and may result in undesirable impacts during periods of flooding.

The transfer of a further 6.3 M cubic metres of overburden to areas south of the highway will also prolong the haulage of material under Bowmans Creek bridge which, because of height restrictions, can only be transported by small highway-type trucks. Ashton originally committed to local residents that operations in the Western Emplacement Area would be confined to the first two years of operations. Similar commitments were given to NPWS, DLWC and the RTA, who wanted assurances that the roadways would be temporary in nature. The additional material will extend this period from 2 years to 5 years.

The increased haulage of overburden to the area south of the highway and the height increase would certainly increase the cumulative impact on those residents south of the highway. Consideration would need to be given to the acquisition of those properties within the consent. These properties were always outside of any zone of affectation.

3. Cost Impact to WML

The incremental cost to the Ashton project will be significant as overburden can only be hauled to the Western Emplacement Areas by small trucks capable of traversing under the Bowmans Creek underpass. The additional haul distance will be an average of 4km which, at a rate of \$1.73 per cubic metre (\$0.963 per tonne), amounts to \$11 M.

The area of additional rehabilitation will also be significant, with an extra 50 Hectares of land requiring rehabilitation. At a unit rate of \$30,000 per Hectare, this amounts to a further \$1.5M.



The area proposed for conservation also contains the majority of gravels nominated for road, rail and paving works on the site. These would need to be purchased off site at an incremental cost of \$20 per tonne or \$5.5 M and would result in significant traffic issues.

A 132kV power line traverses the southern area. These would need to be relocated at an estimated cost of \$1.0 M.

The cost of any potential compulsory acquisition of properties south of the highway is difficult to estimate at this point in time as the reaction of residents to this current proposal has not been canvassed. However, based on previous discussions, it is likely to be in the order of \$5 M.

The total cost of the proposal to the Ashton Project is therefore likely to be in the order of \$24 M.

4. Environmental Impacts of Proposal

In developing the Ashton Coal Project, WML provided scope for input into the development through the community liaison process. Many of the issues that they raised were addressed in the initial design phase and the current proposal will reactivate many of those concerns.

The environmental impacts will be threefold.

The removal of the 15 metre high environmental bund north of the village will increase noise, dust and lighting emissions from that zone. The increase in height of the Western Emplacement Area will result in similar increases in noise, dust and lighting emissions, as well as impact on the visual amenity of the village. The Southern Emplacement Area will be prone to flooding and may result in undesirable scouring of material during periods of flooding.

5. Ecological Issues

In assessing the ecological issues pertaining to the proposed fauna corridor we note that agreement has already been reached to swap the Temporary Common and Travelling Stock Route and that the Glendell Mine already has an approved development consent to remove and relocate Betty's Creek. It is therefore difficult to assign significant benefit to the maintenance of a fauna corridor between two parcels of vegetation that are planned for removal.



Notwithstanding this factor, we dispute a number of assertions contained within the ecological assessment attached to your letter and provide the following clarifications in respect to the assessments that we undertook.

The dates for the Masked Owl call play back (and Powerful Owl, Barking Owl) were 23 April 2001 and 24 April 2001 at the northern woodland and 24 April 2001 and 25 April 2001 at the southern woodland. It is our understanding that the Masked Owl is sedentary within a home range and that it will respond immediately to call play back. In addition, no owl calls were heard during the early evening of 23 January, 23 April and 24 April 2001 while bat echolocation was recorded, or on 23 January and 24 January 2002 when additional searches that looked for evidence of owls occurred (regurgitated pellets / potential nesting sites).

We note that NPWS were not concerned with the level of survey for owls for the April survey, and only required additional survey for the presence of threatened woodland species of bird and the Green and Golden Bell Frog for the summer survey in January.

Likewise, surveys for woodland birds (including the Grey-crowned Babbler) were undertaken in both April 2001 and January 2002, with at least 12 hours devoted to avifauna survey in the northern woodland. No evidence of this species was recorded which, as the name suggests, is a noisy species that responds vocally to intruders. No evidence of their distinctive communal roosting and breeding nests were observed.

In respect to the Glossy Black-cockatoo, it is noted that Higgins (1999) makes no mention of the Bulloak as being a food resource. No evidence of foraging was noted, or has previously been noted by our ecologist in Bulloak habitats, including open mature Bulloak woodlands.

6. Conclusion

The proposal to conserve a parcel of vegetation in the region of the Eastern Emplacement Area was certainly worthy of consideration, but we are of the belief that the cost involved and the consequential environmental impacts and the impacts on the residents of Camberwell and surrounding farms outweigh the ecological benefits to be accrued, particularly considering the planned relocation of Betty's Creek by the Glendell Mine (approved in their consent) and the limited area which can be reasonably conserved. We do however support the department in their goal of maintaining a reasonable level of native vegetation that can be colonised by endangered fauna. We therefore seek your cooperation in establishing a rehabilitation plan for the Eastern Emplacement Area, the Western Emplacement Area and the Southern woodland that can contribute to these goals.

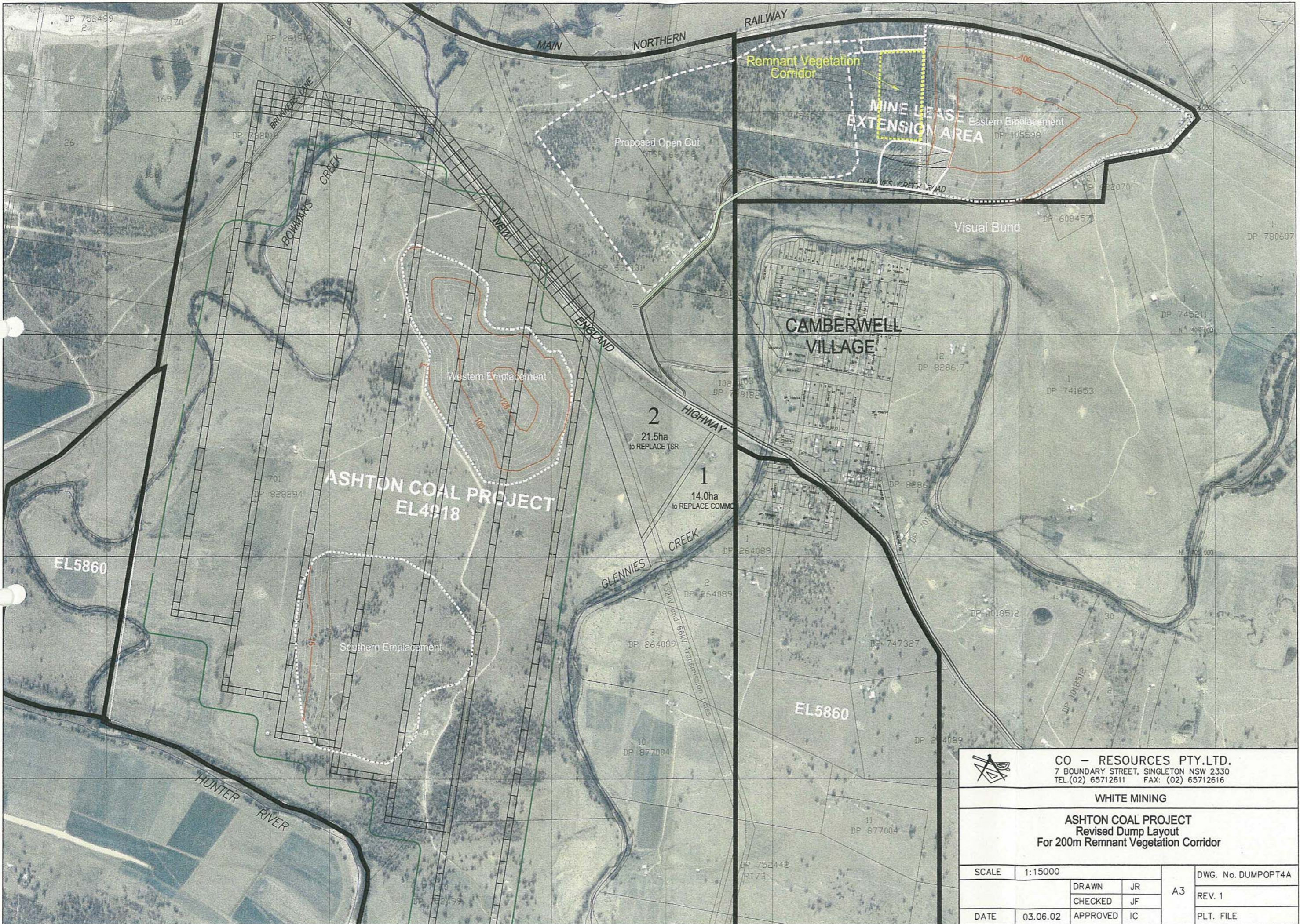


Should you require any further clarification please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'I. Callow'.

IAN CALLOW
Project Manager

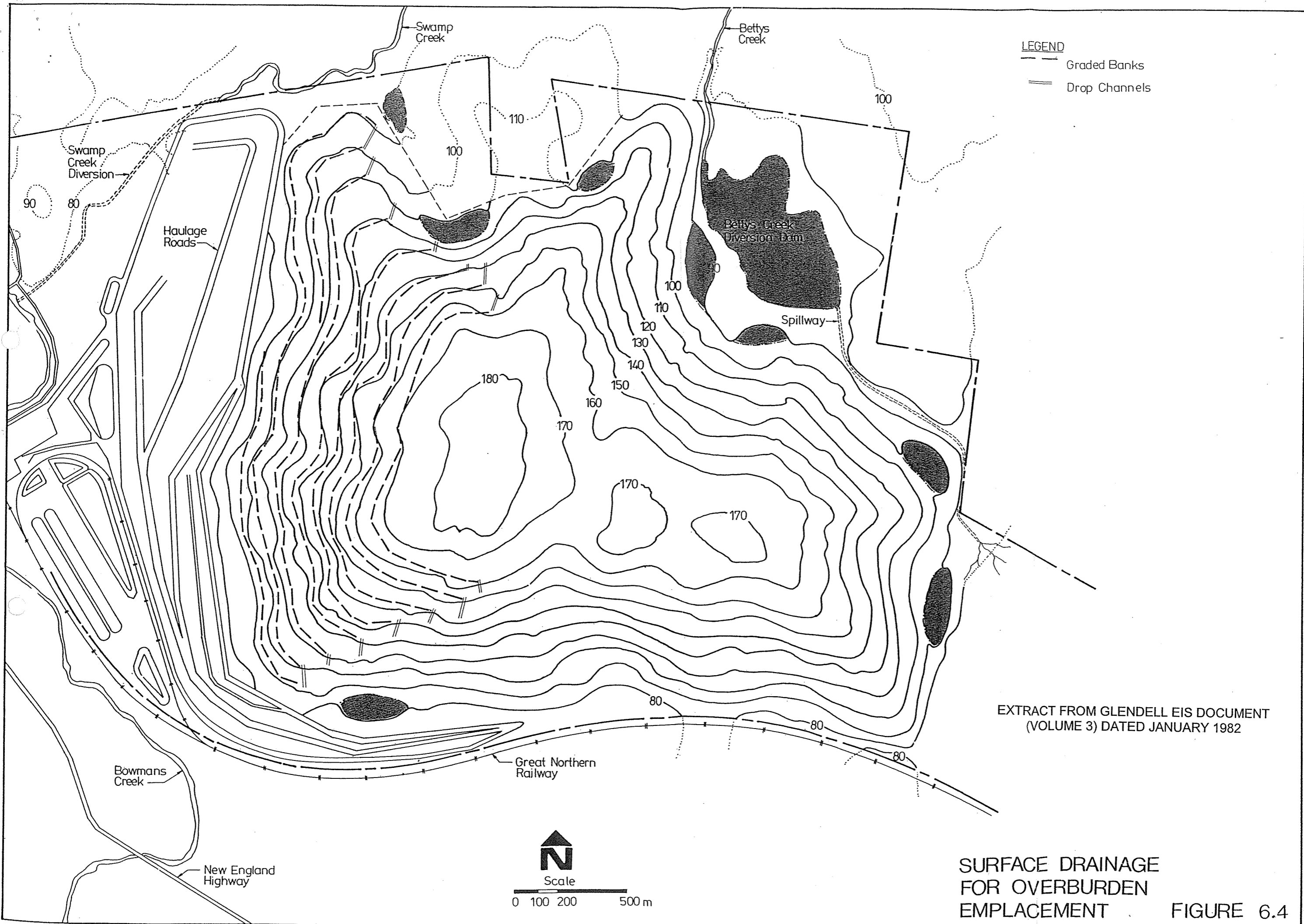


CO - RESOURCES PTY.LTD.
 7 BOUNDARY STREET, SINGLETON NSW 2330
 TEL.(02) 65712611 FAX: (02) 65712616

WHITE MINING

ASHTON COAL PROJECT
 Revised Dump Layout
 For 200m Remnant Vegetation Corridor

SCALE	1:15000	A3	DWG. No. DUMPOPT4A
			REV. 1
DATE	03.06.02	APPROVED	IC
		DRAWN	JR
		CHECKED	JF



LEGEND
 - - - Graded Banks
 = Drop Channels

EXTRACT FROM GLENDELL EIS DOCUMENT
 (VOLUME 3) DATED JANUARY 1982

N
 Scale
 0 100 200 500 m

**SURFACE DRAINAGE
 FOR OVERBURDEN
 EMPLACEMENT** **FIGURE 6.4**



LEGEND

- 50— NOISE CONTOURS dB(a)
- - - - PROPERTY BOUNDARIES and OWNERSHIP
- 90 EXISTING CONTOURS (10m intervals)
- RESIDENCES

- Notes**
1. Contours are for neutral weather conditions
 2. Contours are for descriptive purposes

EXTRACT FROM GLENDELL
DEVELOPMENT CONSENT VARIATION
DATED 16 FEBRUARY 1997

ATTACHMENT NO. 2

**NOISE CONTOURS
Southern Area
Overburden Removal (RL 90)
and Topsoil Stripping**

