



Mr Phillip Brown  
Environment and Community Manager  
Ashton Coal Operations Pty Limited  
PO Box 699  
SINGLETON NSW 2330

Dear Mr Brown,

**Ashton Coal Project (DA 309-11-2001-i)  
Extraction Plan for Longwalls 201-204**

I refer to the Department's letter of 15 March 2017 advising of the Secretary's conditional approval of the Ashton Coal Extraction Plan for Longwalls (LW) 201 – 204. This conditional approval was granted subject to Ashton Coal Operations Pty Limited (ACOL) updating the Water Management Plan (WMP), prior to undertaking secondary extraction, to address DPI Water's recommendations to complement the water monitoring program with additional alluvial bores and isotope sampling.

Since this time, the Department has undertaken further discussions with ACOL and DPI Water regarding the practicality of the recommendations and the suitability of the existing WMP for secondary extraction. The Department was informed that all available alluvial bores near Glennies Creek are currently incorporated into ACOL's monitoring program either as trigger bores or investigation bores. The Department was also informed that isotope sampling from underground discharge points is unsafe and unfeasible.

As a result of these discussions, the Department accepts that the existing WMP is sufficient for the proposed secondary extraction of LWs 201- 204. Consequently, I wish to advise that the Secretary approves the Extraction Plan in accordance with condition 32 of Schedule 3 of the above development consent.

Notwithstanding the above, the Department notes that, separate to the Extraction Plan, some of DPI Water's broader concerns regarding the suitability of the groundwater model to adequately predict volumes and sources of mine inflow, including water from surface and near surface sources, still need to be addressed for the ongoing operation of the mine.

Considering both the hydrogeologically complex setting and the over 10 year history of mining at Ashton, the Department considers there is an opportunity to address these concerns through a technical review of historical water impacts at Ashton. This review should ultimately demonstrate ACOL's understanding of the hydrogeological regime to support its view that additional monitoring to validate the model predictions is unnecessary.

The review should summarise surface and groundwater impact predictions versus actual outcomes and licencing requirements over the life of the underground mine. The Department understands that ACOL should already have this information readily available in environmental assessments, annual reviews, investigations and end of panel reports, and requests that this information be compiled into a concise and easy to follow report. Summary tables and figures should be provided throughout this report, such as a series of cross sections that show seam by

seam, panel by panel subsidence, groundwater and alluvium drawdown and any changes to stream baseflow (pre-mining, during mining and post-mining).

The Department requests that this technical review be submitted within 6 months of the date of this letter.

If you wish to discuss this matter further, please contact Megan Dawson at the details listed above.

Yours sincerely



16/05/17

Matthew Sprott

**A/Director Resource Assessments**  
as the Secretary's nominee