

## LAND USE AND KEY BIODIVERSITY AREAS

Vertex Minerals Limited (VTX) operates in the Australian mining sector, an industry which is highly regulated. To successfully conduct our exploration and mining projects and activities we must meet the standards and criteria of the NSW Resources Regulator and other government authorities such as the Environmental Protection Agency. Our activities are subject to ongoing assessment, with an obligation to continually prove that we are meeting required standards, conditions and regulations to achieve and maintain compliance and approvals from the NSW Regulator. Land use, environmental monitoring and rehabilitation are all important considerations in all VTX projects.

*The VTX Board aims to ensure that economic, environmental, and social considerations are integrated into our strategy, decision-making, risk and opportunity management, operating policies, processes, and systems. **Our Rehabilitation Management Plan's overarching objective is to: 'Return the land to an equivalent capability or better than it was previous to mining or other uses taking place, taking into account historical mining in the area.'***

### What is a Key Biodiversity Area?

According to the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) website, Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA) are '*sites contributing significantly to the global persistence of biodiversity in terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems.*' It can also mean that the site is home to one species found either nowhere else or in only a few other places.

***According to the Key Biodiversity Area Australia website and interactive map, there are no identified KBAs in the Hill End or Hargraves region near Vertex Minerals Limited's NSW Exploration or Mining Projects.***

In 2016 the IUCN published **A Global Standard for the Identification of Key Biodiversity Areas**. The aims of the KBA Standard are to: § Harmonise existing approaches to the identification of important sites for biodiversity; § Support the identification of important sites for elements of biodiversity not considered in existing approaches; § Provide a system that can be applied consistently and in a repeatable manner by different users and institutions in different places and over time; § Ensure that KBA identification is objective, transparent and rigorous through application of quantitative thresholds; § Provide decision-makers with an improved understanding of why particular sites are important for biodiversity.

*VTX acknowledges the importance of identified Key Biodiversity Areas and understands the role of HCV (High Conservation Values) management plans when looking after KBAs and the importance of environmental monitoring and reporting even though we do not have KBAs affecting our sites.*

The HCV approach aims to maintain and/or enhance six defined values and the steps in the HCV process including: identification, management and monitoring. **An HCV is a biological, ecological, social or cultural value of outstanding significance or critical importance.** The HCV process is not a substitute for more comprehensive land use and landscape planning and should be applied alongside, and ideally after, a wider planning exercise has taken place (for example all VTXs environmental submissions to the NSW Regulator and other government authorities).

The six categories of HCVs are:

## The Six High Conservation Values

### HCV 1 Species diversity

Concentrations of biological diversity including endemic species, and rare, threatened or endangered species (RTE), that are significant at global, regional or national levels.

### HCV 6 Cultural values

Sites, resources, habitats and landscapes of global or national cultural, archaeological or historical significance, and/or of critical cultural, ecological, economic or religious/sacred importance for the traditional cultures of local communities or indigenous peoples, identified through engagement with these local communities or indigenous peoples.

### HCV 2 Landscape-level ecosystems and mosaics, and IFL

Large landscape-level ecosystems, ecosystem mosaics and Intact Forest Landscapes that are significant at global, regional or national levels, and that contain viable populations of the great majority of the naturally occurring species in natural patterns of distribution and abundance.



### HCV 3 Ecosystems and habitats

Rare, threatened, or endangered ecosystems (RTE), habitats or refugia.

### HCV 4 Ecosystem services

Basic ecosystem services in critical situations, including protection of water catchments and control of erosion of vulnerable soils and slopes.

### HCV 5 Community needs

Sites and resources fundamental for satisfying the basic necessities of local communities or indigenous peoples (for livelihoods, health, nutrition, water, etc.), identified through engagement with these communities or indigenous peoples.

The High Conservation Value Approach chart and text taken from the Common Guidance for the Management and Monitoring of HCV Report Published September 2014, Amended April 2018 by the HCV Resource Network

## **Commitment to regulatory expectations, appropriate land management and environmental practices.**

The Hill End region in the Central Tablelands of NSW has extensive mining history and Hill End's origins were as one of the richest and earliest goldfields in Australia.

All VTX projects are a mixture of Exploration and Mining Leases and in NSW our holdings neighbour Crown land, private land owners and NPWS. Land in the mining area is zoned 1(a) Rural "A" and the mining leases are located within the Bathurst Local Government Area.

According to a Statement of Environmental Effects report, grassy box woodland is the vegetative community of the surrounding bushland and it has been assessed that our small mining operations pose no significant effect to this ecosystem also stating that considerable areas of grassy box woodland are present in the immediate vicinity.

There are upwards of 265 land parcels of various holdings in the area of the MLs including residential homes, businesses and the bulk of the Hill End township/Historic Site. The property ownership covered by the Vertex authorities is a mix of freehold, NPWS and Crown land. The Crown land parcels are controlled by various authorities including Local Council and the New South Wales Government.

As with all mining and exploration companies in the Australian mining sector, we have strict conditions on our leases and activities. For example, the 2016 Mining Regulation's Conditions of Title which includes the following requirements:

### ***Mining Regulation 2016 Conditions of Title:***

***Condition 4:*** *The holder of a mining lease must take all reasonable measures to prevent, or if that is not reasonably practicable, to minimise, harm to the environment caused by activities under the mining lease.*

***Condition 5:*** *The holder of a mining lease must rehabilitate land and water in the mining area that is disturbed by activities under the mining lease as soon as reasonably practicable after the disturbance occurs.*

In addition to meeting the conditions of our ML, VTX continues to provide all the environmental submissions, protocols and requirements necessary to get approval from the NSW Regulator and our submissions demonstrate our commitment to good stewardship and responsible mining/exploration as outlined below:

## **NSW Resources Regulator approved submissions for regulator compliance**

- Reward Gold Mine Rehabilitation Management Plan – project overview, rehabilitation risk assessment, ROBJ completion criteria, final landform and rehabilitation planning and environmental monitoring, research, modelling and trials
- Reward Gold Mine Forward Program 2022-2025 – 3 year forecast of project activities, rehabilitation, erosion control, environmental monitoring and other care and maintenance works, mine closure criteria/plans.
- RCE – Rehabilitation Cost Estimate documentation – detailed forecast of activities for rehabilitation, removal of infrastructure and mine closure.
- ROBJ – Rehabilitation Objectives Statement with clear goals around water quality, land management, infrastructure removal, ecosystem function, final landform management and soil

## **Environmental monitoring and testing**

- Reward Gold Mine, Red Hill & Hargraves Projects – ongoing dust sample collection and testing, water collection and testing, water table depth measuring and monitoring

**Environmental Protection Agency** - Licence EPL12008 and associated PIRMP (Pollution Incident Response Plan) environmental monitoring and planning, ongoing water monitoring and testing for compliance with EPA standards and licence obligations.

**Community programs and consultation for land management** – working with government groups NPWS (National Parks & Wildlife Services, LLS (Local Land Services) and local groups such as HHEPG (Hargraves & Hill End Pest Control Group) and the Hill End & Tambaroora Common Trust for land management programs including pest animal control to protect local native species and to monitor and prevent introduced flora infestations and apply weed control measures. Also liaising with local fire agencies and SES (State Emergency Service) in relation to asset and land management, bushland, fauna and local community protection for emergencies induced by potential bushfire hazards.

## .Related VTX policies and charters:

- Corporate Governance Plan, Schedule 01, Board Charter, 2021
- Corporate Governance Plan, Schedule 02, Corporate Code of Conduct, 2021
- Corporate Governance Plan, Schedule 03, Audit & Risk Committee Charter, 2021
- Corporate Governance Plan, Schedule 04, Remuneration Committee Charter, 2021
- Corporate Governance Plan, Schedule 05, Nomination Committee Charter, 2021
- Corporate Governance Plan, Schedule 06, ESG Committee Charter, 2021
- Corporate Governance Plan, Schedule 07, Performance Evaluation Policy, 2021
- Corporate Governance Plan, Schedule 09, Risk Management Policy, 2021
- Corporate Governance Plan, Schedule 10, Trading Policy, 2021
- Corporate Governance Plan, Schedule 11, Diversity Policy, 2021
- Corporate Governance Plan, Schedule 12, Whistleblower Protection Policy, 2021
- Corporate Governance Plan, Schedule 13, Anti-Bribery and Anti-Corruption Policy, 2021
- Corporate Governance Plan, Schedule 14, Shareholder Communication Strategy, 2021
- Corporate Governance Plan, Schedule 15, Environmental, Social and Governance Policy, 2021
- Corporate Governance Statement, 2021

## Sources:

Accessed 12 September 2023

Common Guidance for the Management & Monitoring of High Conservation Values – A Good Practice Guide for the Adaptive Management of HCVs. Published by HCV Resources Network 2014, amended 2018.

[https://global-uploads.webflow.com/624493bb51507d22cf218d50/6286866d8bbf4719b4e1d5af\\_HCV\\_Mgmt\\_Monitoring\\_final\\_english.pdf](https://global-uploads.webflow.com/624493bb51507d22cf218d50/6286866d8bbf4719b4e1d5af_HCV_Mgmt_Monitoring_final_english.pdf)

IUCN Report - A Global Standard for the Identification of Key Biodiversity Areas, published 2016  
<https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2016-048.pdf>

KBA Definitions IUCN

[https://www.iucn.org/our-work/region/mediterranean/our-work/biodiversity-knowledge-and-action/key-biodiversity-areas#:~:text=Key%20Biodiversity%20Areas%20\(KBA\)%20are,terrestrial%2C%20freshwater%20and%20marine%20ecosystems.](https://www.iucn.org/our-work/region/mediterranean/our-work/biodiversity-knowledge-and-action/key-biodiversity-areas#:~:text=Key%20Biodiversity%20Areas%20(KBA)%20are,terrestrial%2C%20freshwater%20and%20marine%20ecosystems.)

Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund

<https://www.cepf.net/stories/what-key-biodiversity-area#:~:text=The%20official%20definition%20is%20%E2%80%9Ca,only%20a%20few%20other%20places.>

KBA – Key Biodiversity Area – Interactive Map

<https://www.keybiodiversityareas.org.au/kba-map>

Accessed 11 September 2023:

About TCFD

<https://www.fsb-tcdf.org/about/>

Work of the FSB

<https://www.fsb.org/work-of-the-fsb/#:~:text=The%20FSB%20promotes%20global%20financial,through%20a%20three%2Dstage%20process.>

FSB Press Release 4 December 2015

<https://assets.bbhub.io/company/sites/60/2015/12/12-4-2015-Climate-change-task-force-press-release.pdf>

Final Report

Recommendations of the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures

<https://assets.bbhub.io/company/sites/60/2021/10/FINAL-2017-TCFD-Report.pdf>

Accessed 27 March 2023:

Vertex Minerals Limited Website

<https://vertexminerals.com/>

Vertex Minerals Limited

Corporate Governance Plan

<https://vertexminerals.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Corporate-Governance-Plan-VTX2806539.2.pdf>



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Corporate Governance Statement

<https://vertexminerals.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Corporate-Governance-Statement-VTX2806535.2.pdf>

Australian Human Rights Commission

Social Inclusion in Australia, 2013

<https://humanrights.gov.au/about/news/speeches/social-inclusion-and-human-rights-australia#:~:text=Social%20inclusion%20is%20about%20participation%2C%20equal%20opportunity%2C%20and%20empowerment.>