

Overview

The NSW Government's Strategic Release Framework for Coal and Petroleum Exploration allows for controlled strategic release and competitive allocation of resource exploration titles in NSW. The Strategic Release Framework is designed to provide greater clarity and transparency in decisions about where resource exploration activities may take place. The Strategic Release Framework also introduces a competitive process for determining who may undertake the exploration activities.

Potential Release Areas

The NSW Government's Advisory Body for Strategic Release has asked the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (the Department) to prepare a Preliminary Regional Issues Assessment to consider the benefits, opportunities, risks and constraints of releasing two adjacent areas located near Rylstone in the Mid-Western Regional local government area.

These areas are shown in Figure 1 and include:

- **Hawkins** - an area of 149 km² located approximately 26 km east of Mudgee and directly north of Rylstone; and
- **Rumker** - an area of 178 km² located approximately 37 km south-east of Mudgee and directly north east of Rylstone.

An initial assessment of resource potential undertaken by the Division of Mining, Exploration and Geoscience within the Department of Regional NSW has identified coal resources within the Hawkins and Rumker areas that could be mined by underground mining methods.

In June 2020, the NSW Government released the Strategic Statement on Coal Exploration and Mining. The statement identified 12 areas near existing developed coalfields that should be considered for future development. This includes the Hawkins and Rumker areas which are both identified as having potential to be released for coal exploration.

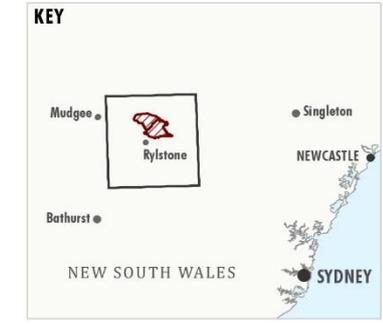
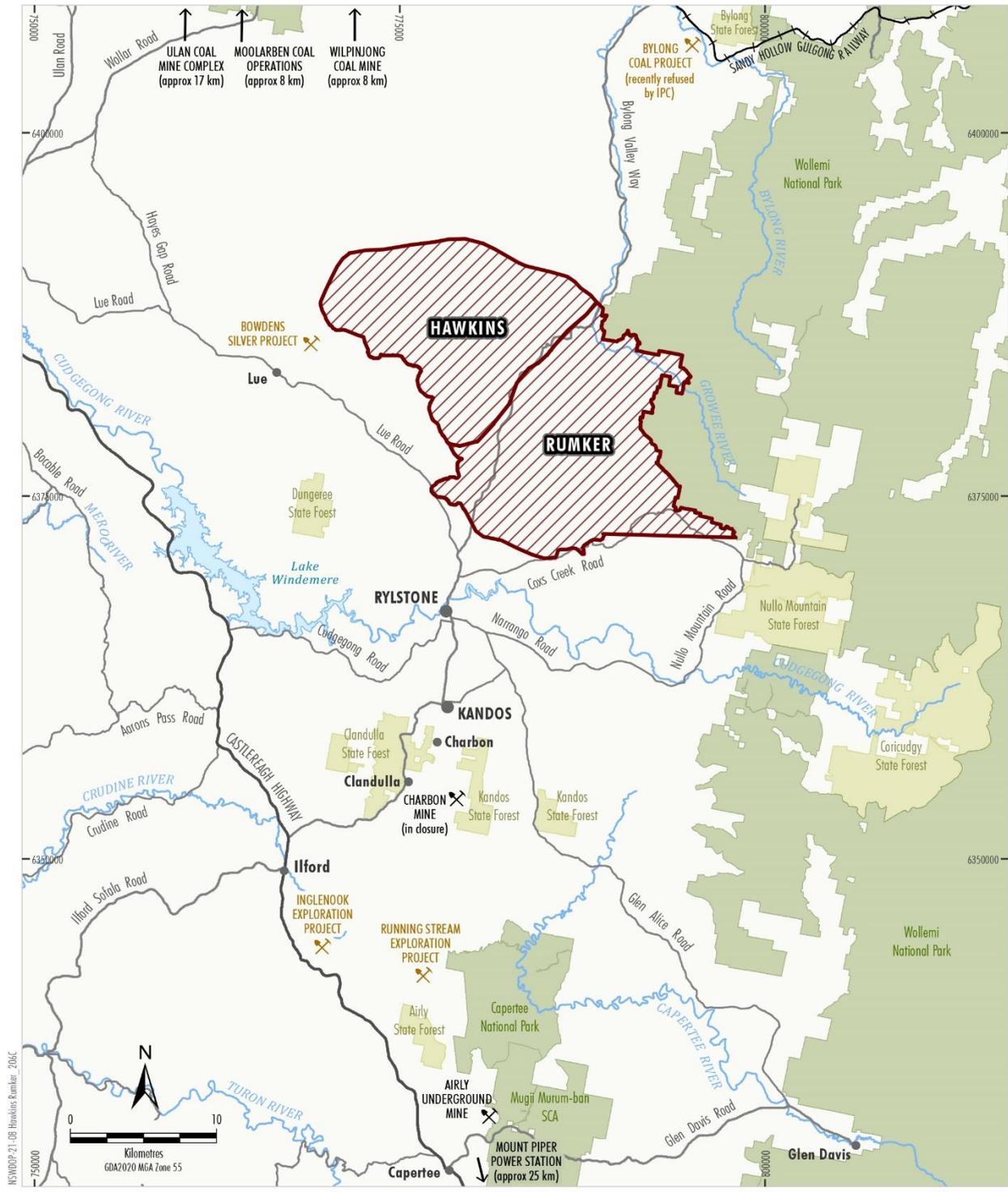
Preliminary Regional Issues Assessment

The Preliminary Regional Issues Assessment involves engaging with interested and potentially impacted stakeholders and consideration of social, environmental and economic matters relating to the potential release areas.

The Department is responsible for undertaking the Preliminary Regional Issues Assessment, which will summarise the key issues, opportunities and constraints associated with releasing the areas for resource exploration.

The assessment will focus on:

- collecting relevant data to identify key social, economic and environmental considerations in the areas;
- engaging with the community to gain knowledge on local matters of interest and concern;
- examining potential risks and constraints to the release of the areas for coal exploration (e.g. significant environmental concerns, potential land use conflicts, impacts on existing infrastructure and services); and



- LEGEND**
- Potential Release Area
 - National Parks and Wildlife Estate
 - State Forest
 - Railway
 - Operating Mine
 - Proposed Mining Operation (Application Lodged)

Source: NSW Spatial Services (2021)

PRELIMINARY REGIONAL ISSUES ASSESSMENT
Locality Plan

Figure 1: Hawkins and Rumker Potential Release Areas

- examining the issues to inform the decision makers on whether or not to release the areas for exploration and the terms of any release.

The Advisory Body for Strategic Release will consider the Preliminary Regional Issues Assessment in recommending to the Minister for Regional NSW whether the areas should be released (either wholly or in part) for resource exploration.

The assessment is an issues identification process and will not pre-empt the assessment or determination of any potential future development applications to develop the resources.

Landholder Rights

Landholders in NSW own the surface land of their properties. Resources that exist below the earth's surface (such as coal) belong to the State. If these resources are extracted, the royalties which are paid to the State are used to benefit the local community and State, in addition to the economic benefits of jobs and economic growth.

The NSW Government wants farmers and landholders to be partners in the resource development process. Government legislation mandates that landholders are entitled to receive compensation for resource exploration and extraction.

A company that holds an exploration licence must have a written access arrangement with a landholder before any activities may commence on that land. The licence holder must talk to the landholder about the location of exploration drilling, must provide a map and description of the land it wishes to access and describe the exploration methods it intends to use.

In NSW, thousands of access arrangements have been successfully negotiated between titleholders and landholders for their mutual benefit. There are instances where parties can't reach agreement through private negotiations, and in this situation the NSW legislative framework sets out the pathway to help landholders and titleholders agree on the terms and conditions for access to land.

Strategic Release Framework

The Strategic Release Framework provides a transparent and strengthened selection process for issuing exploration licences through the consideration of geological, social, environmental and economic factors, and operator suitability and capability. More information about the Strategic Release Framework is available at:

www.planning.nsw.gov.au/regionalissuesassessment.

The responsible authorities and key steps in the Strategic Release Framework process are shown in Table 1 and Figure 2 below.

Table 1. Strategic Release Framework Authorities

Authority	Role
Advisory Body for Strategic Release	Reviews reports and recommends assessment of the release of an area for resource exploration
Department of Planning, Industry and Environment – Planning and Assessment	Undertakes the Preliminary Regional Issues Assessment to inform the Advisory Body about environmental, economic and social issues

Authority	Role
Department of Regional NSW – Mining, Exploration and Geoscience	Oversees the granting of exploration licences and the Strategic Release Framework consideration for resource exploration
Minister for Regional NSW	Determines areas for consideration based on the advice of the Advisory Body for Strategic Release
Cabinet	Endorses Ministerial recommendations for granting of exploration licences

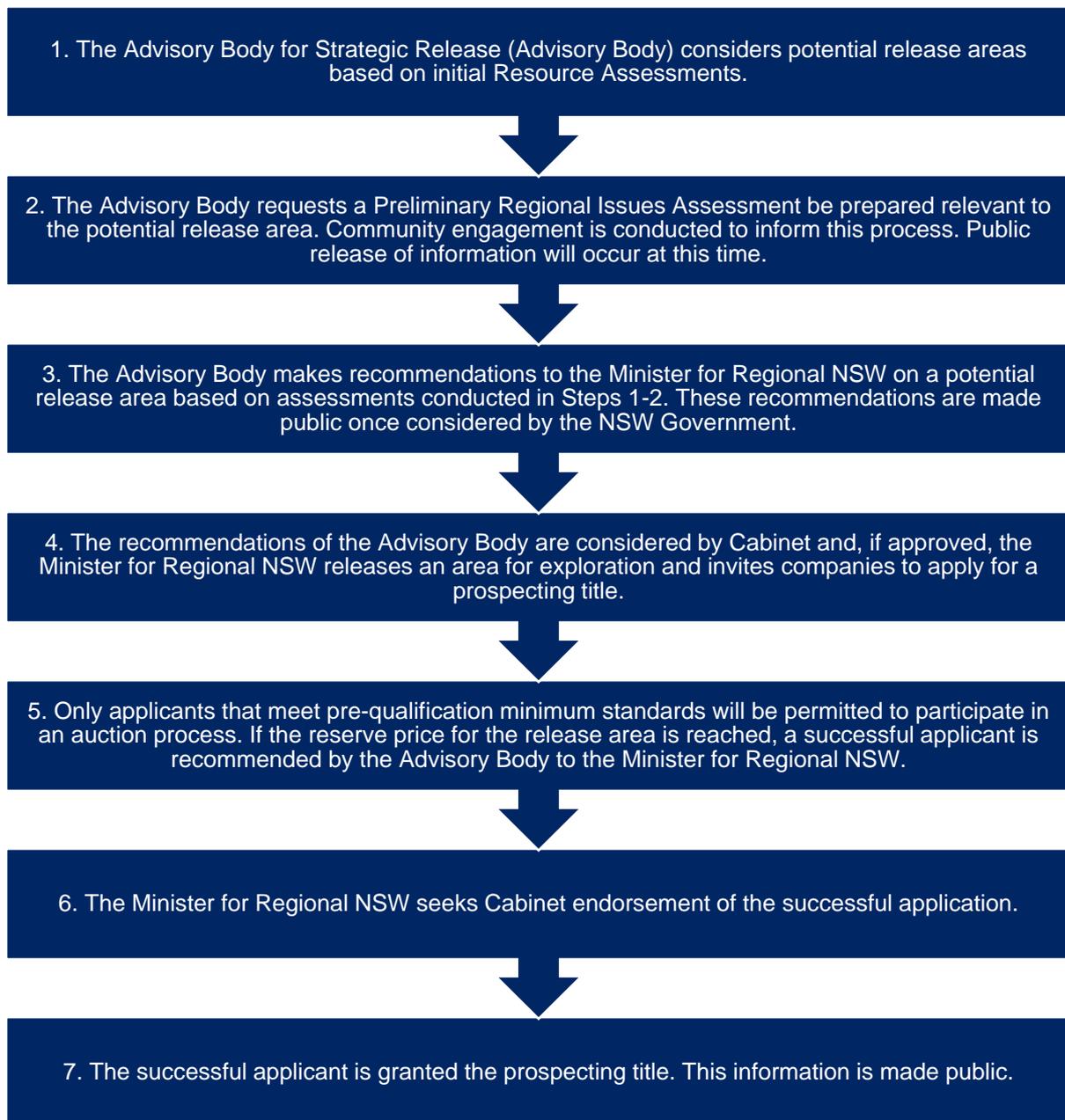


Figure 2: Steps in the Strategic Release Framework

Provide Your Feedback

The Preliminary Regional Issues Assessment is a key step in the Strategic Release Framework. There will also be opportunities for further landholder and community input if the areas are released for exploration and if exploration indicates that a viable, economic resource is present.

At this stage we are seeking input from the community and other stakeholders on the positive and negative environmental, social and economic matters to be considered in making the decision to release these areas.

You are invited to get more information and provide feedback. You can:

Attend one of four issue identification workshops

Location	Date	Time
Rylstone Memorial Hall - Corner of Louee Street and Cudgegong Street, Rylstone	Tuesday 29 June	1-3pm
	Tuesday 29 June	6-8pm
	Wednesday 30 June	1-3pm
The Stables Community and Cultural Centre - 82-84 Market Street, Mudgee.	Wednesday 30 June	6-8pm

Please book your preferred time at www.planning.nsw.gov.au/pria-consult. We will limit participation to about 50 people at each session to give all the opportunity for input and minimise the risk of cancellation in the case of further Covid restrictions.

Contribute online

If you would like to provide written feedback on the potential benefits or risks and constraints associated with coal exploration or mining in the Hawkins and Rumker areas, you can provide your feedback online from 14 June 2021 at www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/hawkins-rumker.

Contact Us

You can contact us at pria@planning.nsw.gov.au or on 02 9995 6674.

If English isn't your first language, please call 131 450. Ask for an interpreter in your language and then request to be connected to the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment on 02 9995 6674.

Learn More

Visit the following links to find out more about:

Preliminary Regional Issues Assessment:
www.planning.nsw.gov.au/regionalissuesassessment

Strategic Release Framework:
www.resourcesandgeoscience.nsw.gov.au/miners-and-explorers/programs-and-initiatives/strategic-release-framework-for-coal-and-petroleum-exploration

Mining and Energy in NSW for Landowners and Community:
www.commonground.nsw.gov.au