

Media Statement

May 13, 2019

West Angelas iron ore mine expansion recommended for environmental approval

The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) has recommended for environmental approval the expansion of an iron ore mine in Western Australia's Pilbara region, subject to conditions including the protection of national park water resources and threatened ghost bats.

The recommendation to the Environment Minister follows a public review process for the EPA assessment of environmental impacts of the proposal, to expand open-cut mining at the West Angelas mine site, 130km north-west of Newman, by 4,100 hectares (ha) to 26,700 ha.

As a result of roundtable discussions with proponent Robe River Mining Co Pty Ltd and the EPA – regarding the impact to Karijini National Park of pumping up to 14 gigalitres annually (GL/a) of groundwater for the proposal – the EPA has recommended a condition for Managed Aquifer Recharge (MAR) to maintain groundwater levels.

To further protect the national park from up to 12 GL/a of proposed surplus water discharge into Turee Creek East, and minimise the impact on riparian vegetation, the EPA recommended conditions including rigorous monitoring under an environmental management plan (EMP).

Further conditions in the EMP, and for rehabilitation under an updated mine closure plan, are recommended to minimise impacts of clearing native vegetation and other disturbances to habitat for conservation-significant fauna.

To offset the significant residual impact of additional clearing – including to the West Angelas Cracking Clay Priority Ecological Community, riparian vegetation, and disturbance to threatened species including the ghost bat – the EPA recommended contributions to the Pilbara Environmental Offset Fund.

EPA Deputy Chair Robert Harvey acknowledged “the scientific rigour of the environmental assessment work and conditions to ensure there is no groundwater drawdown impacts on Karijini National Park, and to limit impacts to surface water flow and quality”.

“This assessment work and recommended conditions constitute a comprehensive approach to management of environmental impacts, following a proactive approach by the proponent and extensive consultation with the EPA,” he said.

The EPA's report to the Minister for Environment is now open for a two-week public appeal period, closing 27 May 2018. Appeals can be made at www.appealsconvenor.wa.gov.au.

EPA Report 1635 is available at www.epa.wa.gov.au/epa-assessment-reports.

The Minister for Environment will make the final decision on the recommendation for approval.

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