

[REDACTED]

25 March 2021

Cc

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Professor Matthew Tonts
Chair
Environmental Protection Authority
Government of Western Australia

Dear Professor Tonts,

Norseman Restart Phase 1¹ – Norseman Gold Project – Referral to the Environmental Protection Authority under Section 38 of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986 (WA)*

I am writing this letter as the [REDACTED] This letter represents the views and comments of the [REDACTED] to Norseman Restart Phase 1 – Norseman Gold Project.

[REDACTED]

Significance of Proposal

The proposal by Pantoro Limited is significant as the mining company and its joint partners, have processing plants, tailing dumps, tyre dumps, access and haul roads, mine rubbish dumps, open pits, shafts, underground mines, and drill holes and lines on tenements directly to the east, north

¹ Pantoro Limited, *ASX Announcements* 12 October 2020 https://asx.api.markitdigital.com/asx-research/1.0/file/2924-02292293-6A1000579?access_token=83ff96335c2d45a094df02a206a39ff4

and south of Norseman. This long-term mining activity has incrementally and cumulatively degraded and destroyed the environment.

The Central Norseman Gold project opened in 1935. The mining project has left a historical legacy of disturbed and degraded country next to the town of Norseman. The project has 146 near contiguous tenements².

There has been no attempt at remediation or rehabilitation of the mining disturbances nor any attempts to remediate the air and noise pollution in the town of Norseman from the tailing dumps and the mining activity. Weeds are prevalent and mining rubbish litters the tenements.

Pantoro Limited is proposing two new open mine pits and associated infrastructure: the Scotia mine to the South and the Cobbler mine to the north west. The Scotia mine is situated on Lake Dundas.

The site of the proposed Cobbler mine is to the NW of Norseman on Lake Cowan and is situated at one of the only undisturbed areas at the southern end of Lake Cowan. The works area of the mine is 3.5 km²³, which will have significant impact on the culture, environment and amenity of the area for the Ngadju people and the people of Norseman. The mine will be 80 metres deep and 620 metres wide⁴. The development area of the Cobbler mine will include tyre landfill⁵ and widened access roads through significant country for both Priority species and Aboriginal Heritage⁶.

The Cobbler mine is 4 km NW of the centre of Norseman and 2.5 km NW of the periphery of town and the hospital. However, given the project area is 3.5km² the mine is directly contiguous to townsite and the hospital will overlook the mine. The tenement use is community and Indigenous land use. The residents of Norseman – Indigenous and non-Indigenous – are deeply concerned about the Cobbler mine and the effect it will have on their quality of life due to the proximity of the mine to the town, and their enjoyment of the environment, amenity and culture of the only untouched area of the southern part of Lake Cowan.

Further information on the proposal can be found in the Pantoro South Pty Ltd W6472/2020/1 Works Approval under the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/wv9cd5wsi5o0pii/AAAd4JXBeOEwvhJHk4waT5Fpa?dl=0>

Flora and Vegetation

The proposal will cause a decline in the extent and condition of vegetation and may precede the loss of species. It will specifically cause a decline in the extent and condition of *Eucalyptus websteriana* subsp. *Norsemanica* a Priority One species⁷, which also has spiritual significance to the Ngadju people and is a bush tucker mallee. Other Threatened and Priority species found in the development area are Threatened species *Daviesia macrocarpa*, and

² Pantoro, *Norseman Gold Project* <https://www.pantoro.com.au/projects/norseman-project/>

³ Pantoro South Pty Ltd *Works Approval W6472/2020/f1* December 2020

⁴ Pantoro Limited, *ASX Announcements* 12 October 2020 p. 16 https://asx.api.markitdigital.com/asx-research/1.0/file/2924-02292293-6A1000579?access_token=83ff96335c2d45a094df02a206a39ff4

⁵ Pantoro South Pty Ltd *Works Approval W6472/2020/f1* December 2020

⁶ Pantoro Limited, *ASX Announcements* 12 October 2020 p. 26. 16 https://asx.api.markitdigital.com/asx-research/1.0/file/2924-02292293-6A1000579?access_token=83ff96335c2d45a094df02a206a39ff4

⁷ Government of Western Australia, Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, *Nature Map*, <https://naturemap.dbca.wa.gov.au/>

Eucalyptus platydisca an endemic species; P1 species *Eucalyptus jimberlanica*, *Bossiaea aurantiaca*, *Beyeria lechenaultii* (Pale Turpentine Bush), *Grevillea phillipsiana*, *Micromyrtus papillosa*, *Philotheca nutans*; P2 species *Acacia kerryana*, *Aotus* sp. *Dundas*; and P3 species *Allocasuarina eriochlamys* subsp. *Grossa*, *Eucalyptus brockwayi* (Dundas Mahogany), *Notisia intonsa*, *Pityrodia chrysocalyx*, *Chrysocephalum apiculatum* subsp. *Norsemanense*, *Eremophila purpurascens*.⁸

Populations of Threatened and Priority species have been incrementally fragmented and isolated over the project life and the new mines proposed could cause species loss. As such a comprehensive assessment of the whole of the project area is required.

The mining proposal will also have impacts on the substrate and will disturb the soil causing either temporary or permanent damage to flora and vegetation in the footprint of the mine on the land adjacent to Lake Cowan.

Opuntiod cacti is a weed of national significance⁹ and is already widespread in the rubbish dumps in the Norseman Gold tenements. The weed has spread incrementally over the 85 years of the project and has not been remediated. The cumulative effect of the invasive weed spread in the Great Western Woodlands will be significantly increased if the new mine should go ahead.

Terrestrial Fauna¹⁰

The Ngadju Rangers have found evidence of nest mounds and have sighted Threatened species Malleefowl *Leipoa ocellata*¹¹ in mallee country close to the Norseman Gold tenements. We are concerned that there has been incremental impacts on Malleefowl habitat in the Norseman Gold Project area over the life of the project. We are further concerned that the footprint of the Cobbler mine will be on Mallee country, which will further destroy habitat for Malleefowl. As such we refer the project to the EPA so that a comprehensive environmental assessment can be undertaken.

Landforms

As per the *Environmental Factor Guideline: Landforms*¹² Lake Cowan supports significant amenity, cultural and heritage values linked to its defining physical features.

Lake Cowan has been severely degraded in other areas to the north by the Norseman Gold Project and there has been no remediation of these areas. If the Cobbler mine proceeds it will destroy the last stretch of pristine area in the southern part of Lake Cowan. The works area of the mine is 3.5 km² and the pit is 80 metres deep, which will have significant impact on the environment of the

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ Government of Western Australia, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, *Opuntiod Cacti*, <https://weeds.org.au/weeds-profiles/>

¹⁰ Government of Western Australia, Environmental Protection Authority *Environmental Factor Guideline Terrestrial Fauna* <https://www.epa.wa.gov.au/policies-guidance/environmental-factor-guideline-terrestrial-fauna>

¹¹ Australian Government, Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment, Species Profile and Threats Database, *Leipoa ocellata – Malleefowl* https://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/sprat/public/publicspecies.pl?taxon_id=934

¹² Government of Western Australia, Environmental Protection Authority *Environmental Factor Guideline Landforms* https://www.epa.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/Policies_and_Guidance/Guideline-Landforms-29062018.pdf

area and destroy the amenity, culture and heritage for the Ngadju people and the people of Norseman.

This is a sensitive environment and there will significant residual impact. The mine development will severely degrade the landform of Lake Cowan by the presence of a pit, landfill, dumps, and trye landfill.

Aboriginal Heritage

We are concerned that the footprint of the mine will impact the spiritual significance of Lake Cowan as the place of men's and women's dreaming stories. The area of the mine site is on Warranypana, the long ground. As well as women's sites the southern end of Lake Cowan contains burial sites and men's ceremonial and initiation areas.

The mine will be situated directly on the site of a women's dreaming story and the access road is directly in the perimeter of a registered women's site and also a women's traditional bush tucker area. Furthermore, we are deeply concerned that the mine will impact the ceremonial spring at the registered site.

WMC Resources prepared the *Report of an Aboriginal Heritage Field Inspection (Ngadju People) of Central Gold Corporation and St. Ives Gold Buldania Tenements Near Norseman, Western Australia*. The report prepared by WMC Resources Community Relations Officer, John Gleason, documents Aboriginal heritage field inspections 25 – 27 May 1999. In the report Mr Gleason discounts the information provided by the only female Ngadju participant and her information on the women's dreaming story. This heritage report written over 20 years ago provides the basis for Pantoro's decisions regarding Aboriginal Heritage. It is now standard practice for heritage reports to be prepared by independent consultants employed by PBCs and not by mining company representatives.

Under the *EPA Guidelines 41¹³* proponents need to consider and apply heritage provisions. The Aboriginal Heritage impacts are not adequately managed or controlled by the Works Approval process, nor by the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972* and as such this project should be referred to the EPA for a full assessment so that Ngadju Aboriginal Heritage is protected.

The cumulative impact of mining disturbance over the 85 years of Norseman Gold project has had an irremediable environmental effect. The Works Approval process does not take into account the cumulative impacts of the Norseman Gold project on the environment over the life of the project, nor under Part V of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* are the environment and heritage adequately protected.

The current legislative arrangements i.e. *Mining Act 1978*, *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972 (WA)*, *Native Title Act 1993* and the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* do not protect the environment

¹³ Government of Western Australia, Environmental Protection Authority *Guidance for the Assessment of Environmental Factors, Assessment of Aboriginal Heritage No.41* p. 5 (April 2004)
<https://www.epa.wa.gov.au/policies-guidance/assessment-aboriginal-heritage-gs-41>

from the incremental and cumulative impacts of the Norseman Gold Project and as such we refer the project to the Environmental Protection Authority for assessment.

We request that the EPA makes an urgent decision as Panotoro South Pty Ltd have already commenced some works at the site.

Please do not hesitate to contact me, if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely,

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

