

Environmental Protection Act 1986

Section 43A

**NOTICE OF DECISION TO CONSENT TO CHANGE TO PROPOSAL DURING
ASSESSMENT**

PERSON TO WHOM THIS NOTICE IS GIVEN

VRX Silica Limited (ACN: 142 014 873)
Level 1, 6 Thelma Street
WEST PERTH WA 6005

PROPOSAL TO WHICH THIS NOTICE RELATES:

Arrowsmith North Silica Sand Project
Assessment No. 2291

Pursuant to section 43A of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* (EP Act), the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) consents to the proponent making the following changes to the proposal during assessment without a revised proposal being referred:

- Relocation of the silica sand processing plant from the Access and Processing Development Envelope to within the Mine Development Envelope.
- Removal of the train loadout facilities.
- Removal of the solar farm.
- A reduction in the extent of the Access and Processing Development Envelope from 447 hectares (ha) to 61 ha and renaming it the Access Development Envelope.
- An overall reduction in the extent of clearing from 412.2 ha to 366.5 ha.

See Figure 1 and Schedule 1 attached.

EFFECT OF THIS NOTICE:

1. The EPA considers that the change is unlikely to significantly increase any impact that the proposal may have on the environment. The proponent may change the proposal as provided for in this notice.

RIGHTS OF APPEAL:

There are no rights of appeal under the EP Act in respect of this decision.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'MAT TONTS', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Professor Matthew Tonts
Delegate of the Environmental Protection Authority
CHAIR

13 October 2021

Schedule 1

Change to Proposal

Table 1: Summary of the proposal

Proposal title	Arrowsmith North Silica Sand Project
Proponent name	VRX Silica Limited
Short description	<p>Construct and operate a silica sand mine in the Geraldton Sandplain bioregion of WA, approximately 270 km north of Perth.</p> <p>The proposal includes the sequential block mining of silica sand, development of a mine feed plant, moveable surface conveyor, pipeline, processing plant, freshwater supply bore, access corridor, laydown, administration, water storage and associated infrastructure* including: gas fired power station, communications equipment, offices, workshop and laydown areas.</p>

Table 2: Location and proposed extent of physical and operational elements

Element	Current proposed extent	Proposed change to extent
<i>Physical Elements</i>		
Mine Development Envelope	Clearing of no more than 360 ha within the 1,025 ha Mine Development Envelope.	Clearing of no more than 360 ha within the 1,025 ha Mine Development Envelope. Relocation of the Processing Plant from the Access and Processing Development Envelope to within the southwest corner of the Mine Development Envelope.
Access and Processing Development Envelope	Clearing of no more than 52.2 ha, of which no more than 16.2 ha is native vegetation, within the 447 ha Access and Processing Development Envelope.	Clearing of no more than 6.5 ha of native vegetation within the 61 ha Access Development Envelope. Relocation of the Processing Plant from the Access and Processing Development Envelope to within the southwest corner of the Mine Development Envelope.
Train Loadout Facilities*	The original Proposal included a train loadout that would be located adjacent	Removal of train loadout facilities from the Proposal. Train loadout is no longer part

	to the Processing Plant stockpiles.	of the Proposal, product will instead be hauled off-site using trucks.
Solar Farm*	The original Proposal included a solar farm that would be constructed on an area of cleared land within the western option of the Access and Processing Development Envelope.	Removal of the solar farm from the Proposal. Landholder negotiations for a suitable site are unlikely to be completed prior to assessment.
Operational Elements		
Mining and Vegetation Direct Transfer (VDT)	Topsoil and vegetation is to be transferred to rehabilitation areas via VDT method. The total of all cleared areas within the Mine Development Envelope is to be no more than 10 ha at any time (i.e. excluding rehabilitation areas).	No change proposed.
Groundwater Abstraction	Abstraction of up to 0.9 GL per annum from the Yarragadee aquifer.	No change proposed.

* Please note that these elements were not specifically included in the key characteristics table but were included within the original proposal.

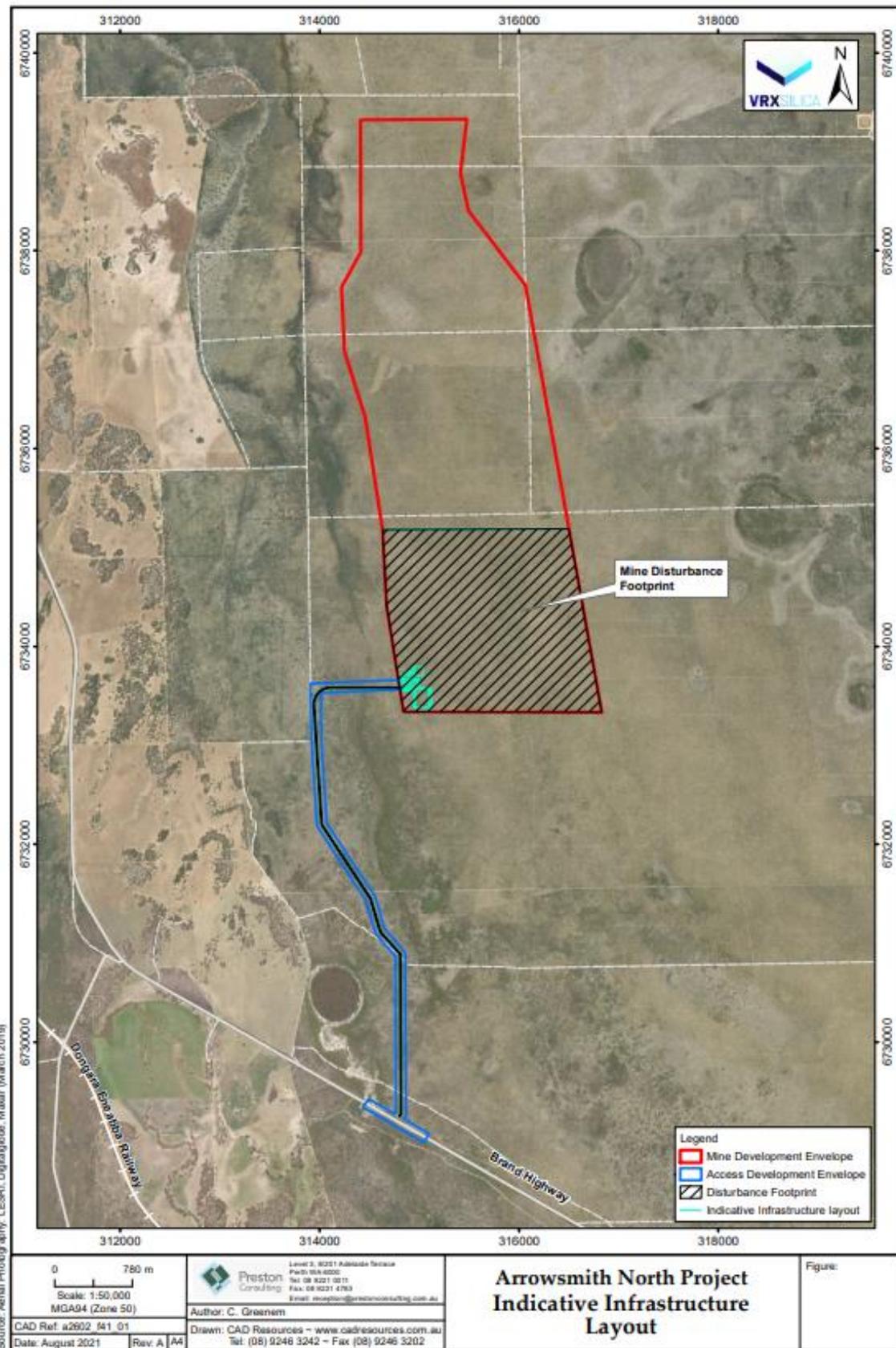


Figure 1: Revised Development Envelope and Disturbance Footprint

Environmental Protection Act 1986

Section 43A

STATEMENT OF REASONS

CONSENT TO CHANGE PROPOSAL DURING ASSESSMENT

Proposal: Arrowsmith North Silica Sand Project

Proponent: VRX Silica Limited

Decision

For the reasons outlined below, the EPA has determined to consent to the proponent changing the Proposal outlined in Schedule 1 attached to this Statement of Reasons.

Background

On 17 March 2021, VRX Silica Limited referred the proposal to the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) under section 38 of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* (EP Act). The proposal included the sequential block mining of silica sand, development of a mine feed plant, moveable surface conveyor, pipeline, processing plant, freshwater supply bore, access corridor, administration, water storage and associated infrastructure including a gas fired power station, communications equipment, offices, workshop and laydown areas.

The EPA determined to assess the proposal at the level of Public Environmental Review (4-week public review period) on 24 May 2021.

In advance of the EPA preparing a report on the outcome of its assessment of the proposal, the proponent has sought the EPA's consent to the proponent changing the proposal.

Relevant Statutory and Administrative Provisions

Section 3.8 of the Environmental Impact Assessment (Part IV Divisions 1 and 2) Procedures Manual 2016 guides what information the EPA requires from a person wanting to change its proposal during assessment.

The proponent is required to provide:

- details of the proposed change
- statement of the significance of the change and
- rationale for the change.

Materials considered in making this decision

In determining whether to consent to the proponent changing the proposal the EPA has considered the following:

1. Arrowsmith North Silica Sand Project (Assessment No. 2291) – Section 43A Request (VRX Silica Limited, August 2021).
2. Supplementary Report – Arrowsmith North Silica Sand Project, Revision 0 (Preston Consulting, March 2021).
3. EPA Guidance and procedures.

Consideration

1. Nature of the proposed change

The proponent has proposed the following changes to the Proposal:

- Relocation of the silica sand processing plant from the Access and Processing Development Envelope to within the Mine Development Envelope.
- Removal of the train loadout facilities.
- Removal of the solar farm.
- A reduction in the extent of the Access and Processing Development Envelope from 447 hectares (ha) to 61 ha (a reduction of 386 ha) and renaming it the Access Development Envelope. This would result in a reduction of native vegetation clearing from 16.2 ha to no more than 6.5 ha (or approximately 60 per cent).
- An overall reduction in the extent of clearing from 412.2 ha to 366.5 ha (a reduction of 45.7 ha or approximately 11 per cent).

2. Stage of the assessment process

The EPA determined to assess the proposal at the level of Public Environmental Review (4-week public review period) on 24 May 2021. A draft environmental scoping document is currently in preparation.

3. Currency, relevance and reliability of the information, including submissions

The change is to incorporate the recent revision of the indicative footprint. The information relating to the change is considered reliable and relevant in relation to the change.

4. Community engagement

The initial referral was open for 7-day public comment from 1 April to 9 April 2021. The environmental review document will be subject to a 4-week public review period.

5. Level of public concern

A total of three submissions were received during the 7-day public comment period on the level of assessment, with all from the public recommending Assess – Public Environmental Review. The EPA does not consider that the proposed changes will result in an increased level of interest in the proposal.

Consideration of Whether the Change is Unlikely to Significantly Increase Any Impact that the Proposal May Have on the Environment

The following were considered:

- Values, sensitivity and the quality of the environment which is likely to be impacted

The EPA Chair's determination identified the preliminary key environmental factors as:

- Flora and Vegetation
- Terrestrial Fauna
- Inland Waters
- Social Surroundings
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Air Quality

The change to the proposal will not introduce any additional environmental factors or different impacts to the environment from that which was referred. The proponent has revised their footprint and vegetation clearing values which will result in a reduction in potential environmental impacts.

- Extent (intensity, duration, magnitude and geographic footprint) of the likely impacts

The EPA considers that the extent of the likely impacts from the proposal will decrease as a result of the change.

The change to the proposal will not alter the duration of the operation or life of the mine. The change, however, represents a reduction in magnitude by decreasing the overall native vegetation clearing from 412.2 ha to 366.5 ha (a reduction of 45.7 ha or approximately 11 per cent). The geographic footprint will be reduced by relocating the processing plant to within the Mine Development Envelope, removal of the western access route and removing the extent of the southern access route that was south of the intersection with the Brand Highway, removal of the train loadout facilities and removal of the solar farm.

- Consequence of the likely impacts (or change)

The change to the proposal does not alter the types of impacts associated with the proposal, however, it is expected the change will decrease the likely impacts on flora and vegetation, terrestrial fauna, inland waters and social surroundings.

The proponent has chosen to transport the silica sand to Geraldton Port via road instead of rail. As a result, the proponent proposes to use only the southern access option to the extent of the intersection with Brand Highway and the western option of the Access and Processing Development Envelope is no longer required. The Access and Processing Development Envelope (proposed to be renamed as the Access Development Envelope) has been reduced from 447 ha to 61 ha and the extent of clearing reduced from 52.2 ha to 6.6 ha. This

change will avoid impacts to the Arrowsmith River, a registered Aboriginal heritage site.

- Resilience of the environment to cope with the impacts or change

The resilience of the environment to cope remains relatively unchanged from that of the original proposal. The change would result in a reduction in potential environmental impacts.

- Cumulative impacts with other projects

There would be no additional cumulative impacts with other projects. The change would result in a reduction in potential environmental impacts.

- Connections and interactions between parts of the environment to inform holistic view of impacts of the whole environment

There is no change to the potential connections and interactions of the environment due to the change from the original Proposal.

- Level of confidence in the prediction of impacts and the success of proposed mitigation

The change to clearing and the geographic footprint would result in a reduction in potential environmental impacts. This reduction in clearing increases the level of confidence in the predicted impacts.

- Public interest about the likely effect of the proposal, if implemented, on the environment, and public information that informs the EPA's assessment

Submissions received during the 7-day public comment period on the level of assessment indicated that the scale of vegetation clearing as a result of the Proposal was a concern. The reduction in clearing and change to the geographic footprint is likely to decrease the level of public concern.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the EPA considers that the change is unlikely to significantly increase any impact the proposal may have on the environment primarily because:

- The proposed changes do not alter the key environmental factors likely to be impacted by the proposal and will be considered during the assessment.
- The change will result in a reduction of native vegetation clearing and a smaller overall disturbance footprint.
- Impacts to the Arrowsmith River, a registered Aboriginal heritage site, will be avoided.

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