

Summary of reasons for decision – request to amend a referred proposal under s. 38C of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*

Proposal title: Ravensthorpe Lithium Project - Exploration

Proponent: Bulletin Resources Limited

Proposal referral date: 09-02-2023

Date request to amend referred proposal under s. 38C received: 02-06-2023

Date additional information received: 21-08-2023

Environment Online Reference Number: APP-0000250

Existing referred proposal:

Bulletin Resources Limited are proposing a mineral exploration programme on exploration licence 74/655 within the Shire of Ravensthorpe.

The proposal is within the Cocanarup Timber Reserve located to the west of the Ravensthorpe townsite.

The proposal would include a total disturbance footprint of seven hectares (ha) for tracks and drill pads developed in two stages within a 222 ha development envelope over two years.

Short description of amendment sought:

The proposal elements to be amended include:

- The disturbance envelope being significantly reduced to cover areas that have been subject to targeted surveys disturbance footprint (222 to 22 ha)
- The disturbance footprint being reduced from 7 ha to 2.3 ha
- Proposal timeframe being reduced to 12 months (not including rehabilitation and monitoring) from 24 months.

With the proposed amendment, the proponent has also provided environmental outcomes and further mitigation measures.

Decision:

Amendment to proposal as set out in attachment 1 is approved.

Environmental factors relevant to amendments:

- Flora and vegetation: key values of remnant salmon gum woodland and priority 1 flora species (Lepidosperma sp. Mt Chester and Lepidosperma sp. Mt Short).
- Terrestrial fauna: key values of habitat for threatened and priority fauna species including the Carnaby's black cockatoo (breeding and foraging habitat), malleefowl, dibbler, red-tailed phascogale, heath mouse and chuditch.
- Social surroundings: key value of the development envelope potentially containing Aboriginal cultural heritage.

Summary of likely changes to environmental impacts from proposed amendment

Amendment sought	Changes to environmental impacts
<p>Change to development envelope from 222 ha to 22 ha as seen in Attachment 1.</p> <p>Change to disturbance footprint from 7 ha to 2.3 ha.</p>	<p>The proponent has reduced the proposal’s disturbance footprint and development envelope, proposed further mitigation and provided relevant environmental outcomes for the proposal. No additional environmental factors are likely to be impacted by the proposal. The likely impacts to the following environmental factors are likely to decrease as a result of the proposed amendments:</p> <p>Flora and vegetation Total clearing of native vegetation has been reduced from 7 ha to 2.3 ha due to the amended disturbance footprint. As the amended development envelope has been subject to targeted surveys, there is greater certainty that the proponent can avoid significant flora and vegetation. The proponent will not clear any threatened or priority ecological communities. Ground disturbance around significant salmon gums (>300 mm diameter at breast height) will be avoided, with the closest cut and fill pad being 57 m away. Other tracks and pads will use raised blade clearing to avoid damaging the root systems of significant trees. Impacts to two priority 1 flora species will be avoided. Indirect impacts to flora and vegetation due to dust, fire, saline water, dieback, etc. have been minimised using industry standard procedures.</p> <p>Terrestrial fauna Total clearing of terrestrial fauna habitat has been reduced from 7 ha to 2.3 ha due to the amended disturbance footprint. As the amended development envelope has been subject to targeted surveys, there is greater certainty that the proponent can avoid impacts to significant fauna habitat. The proponent will avoid clearing near malleefowl mounds or undertaking disturbance that could affect significant salmon gums that provide potential breeding hollows for the Carnaby’s cockatoo and may be used by other significant fauna such as the red-tailed phascogale. Loss of moderate value Carnaby’s cockatoo foraging habitat has been reduced from 7 ha to 2.3 ha. Indirect impacts to terrestrial fauna habitat due to dust, fire, saline water, dieback, etc. have been minimised using industry standard procedures. Impacts are likely to be reduced in comparison to those in the existing referred proposal.</p>

	<p>Social surroundings</p> <p>No Aboriginal cultural heritage was identified within the development envelope during surveys. However, due to a historical event and previous Aboriginal occupation of the area, there is the potential for Aboriginal cultural heritage to be concealed below the surface and disturbed. The proponent has committed to consulting with the traditional owners and using cultural monitors during ground disturbance. Due to the reduced disturbance and use of raised blade clearing, the likelihood of Aboriginal heritage sites being disturbed is likely to be reduced as a result of the proposed amendments.</p>
<p>Proposal timeframe being reduced to 12 months from 24 months.</p>	<p>The reduced timeframe of the amended proposal may result in quicker rehabilitation allowing for faster regeneration of native vegetation and fauna habitat. The amended proposal timeframe is unlikely to change any potential impacts to Aboriginal heritage.</p>

Summary of consultation

DMIRS advised that the environmental impacts of the existing referred proposal could be assessed and regulated through the clearing permit process under Part V of the Environmental Protection Act 1986. While not directly relevant to the s38C, the environmental impacts of the amended proposal would likely be reduced and DMIRS would still be capable of regulating the impacts of the proposal.

Summary of consideration of amendment

The EPA has considered whether, if the proposal were already approved, the amendment would be a significant amendment. This has included considering the likely significance of the:

- effects of the proposed amendment on its own
- effects of the proposed amendment in the context of the existing referred proposal
- cumulative environmental impacts
- holistic impacts.

The EPA has considered whether it has sufficient information about the proposed amendment to be able to make a decision whether to assess the proposal as amended, and if so, to decide the level of assessment.

The EPA has considered whether the amended proposal will still be substantially the same character as the existing referred proposal.

Approval – not a significant amendment

The EPA considers the amended proposal to be substantially the same character as the existing referred proposal and does not consider that the amendment would be a significant amendment if the proposal were already approved. The EPA considers it has enough information to reasonably proceed to make decisions about assessment without a new referral being submitted.

Attachments

- Amended proposal content document (including figure of amended proposal development envelope and disturbance footprint)

Appeals: Decision not appealable.

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

Prof. Matthew Tonts

CHAIR

Delegate of the Environmental Protection Authority

Date: 1 September 2023