



**Environmental
Protection Authority**

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EPA Bulletin: 1097

THE HON DR JUDY EDWARDS (MLA)
MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

Dear Minister

**PLANS FOR ROAD STREAM CROSSINGS IN CAR INFORMAL RESERVES,
MINING LEASE 1SA: ALCOA OF AUSTRALIA**

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the Environmental Protection Authority's (EPA) advice on the above plans under Section 16(e) of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*. This advice will also be made publicly available as per normal protocol.

The EPA's recommendations are on page 3 of this letter.

1. Introduction and background

The Commonwealth of Australia and the State of Western Australia signed the Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) on 4 May 1999. The RFA established a system of Formal and Informal Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative (CAR) Reserves. Such Reserves are located throughout the area defined as the RFA boundary, and some are within Alcoa of Australia's Mining Lease (ML) 1SA. The RFA process provides for disturbance of CAR Informal Reserves subject to relevant State approval processes.

As was outlined to you in previous advice¹ (copy at Attachment A), in 2001 the EPA developed, in consultation with Alcoa, the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) and the then Department of Resources Development, a process to review plans by Alcoa to disturb CAR Informal Reserves in Mining Lease 1SA. This process is consistent with the requirements of the RFA and the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*.

¹ EPA (2001). 'Plans for bauxite mining and haul road stream crossing in CAR Informal Reserves, ML 1SA: Alcoa of Australia (advice under s16(e) of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*), Bulletin 1015'.

On 13 February 2003, Alcoa submitted plans ("the Plans") to the Mining and Management Programme Liaison Group² (MMPLG) to disturb a total of 2.4 hectares of vegetation within three CAR Informal Reserves, as part of ongoing bauxite mining and infrastructure development at its Huntly mine. A detailed biological assessment was also submitted for each CAR Informal Reserve to be disturbed.

The 'CAR Informal Reserves Evaluation Committee', which includes a representative from the Conservation Council of Western Australia³, has considered the Plans in the first instance. Following the Committee's detailed review of the Plans, the Committee recommended to the MMPLG that Alcoa be granted approval to clear the CAR Informal Reserves as proposed. The MMPLG has endorsed this advice in a letter to the EPA (see Attachment B). This process is consistent with the agreed process referred to above.

2. Environmental acceptability of the Plans

The EPA notes that:

- the three CAR Informal Reserves affected by the Plans occur as linear stream reserves;
- Alcoa has conducted Aboriginal heritage surveys, dieback mapping and vegetation surveys as part of routine pre-mining assessments and commissioned consultants to carry out rare flora and fauna assessments for each of the three CAR Informal Reserve affected by the Plans, and modified the Plans in accordance with recommendations made by its consultants so as to reduce the environmental impacts;
- the Plans will not affect any rare or endangered flora and fauna, or any Threatened Ecological Communities recognised at the State or National level;
- no heritage sites occur in the affected areas;
- any occurrences of dieback within or adjacent to the affected areas can be appropriately managed by Alcoa;
- the vegetation affected by the haul road areas is considered to be well represented in the conservation estate;
- Alcoa will aim to rehabilitate the haul road areas to a jarrah forest ecosystem as per the rehabilitation prescriptions established in the Alcoa/CALM Working Arrangements⁴, which will return the stream crossings to natural levels and use a tailored seed mix to return species that are typical of stream zone vegetation; and

² The MMPLG, which was established by the State in 1979, oversees environmental aspects of Alcoa's mining operations in ML 1SA. The Group has representatives from Alcoa, the Department of Environmental Protection, Water and Rivers Commission, Water Corporation, the Department of Industry and Resources and CALM.

³ The CAR Informal Reserves Evaluation Committee is a sub-committee of the MMPLG, comprising members of the Mining Operations Group, which comprises representatives of Alcoa, the Department of Industry and Resources, CALM and Water Corporation, plus a representative of the Conservation Council of WA. The MMPLG uses the CAR Informal Reserves Evaluation Committee to review any plans by Alcoa to disturb CAR Informal Reserves in ML 1SA, and to report its findings to the MMPLG.

⁴ The Working Arrangements, which are prepared by Alcoa and CALM, contain processes and procedures on how Alcoa and CALM operate within State Forest, and are reviewed bi-annually. The Arrangements cover issues such as forest hygiene, logging protocols, dieback identification protocols and reporting of any rare or endangered flora and fauna species.

- relevant representatives from CALM, Water Corporation, Department of Industry and Resources and the Conservation Council of WA reviewed the Plans and subsequently recommended that the Plans be approved.

Given the above, the EPA considers that the Plans do not impose an unacceptable impact on the environment.

3. Recommendations

The EPA recommends to the Minister for Environment and Heritage that:

1. The Minister notes the EPA's conclusion that the Plans by Alcoa to disturb 2.4 ha of vegetation within three CAR Informal Reserves in ML 1SA do not impose an unacceptable impact on the environment.
2. The Minister accepts the EPA advice that the disturbance of three CAR Informal Reserves in Alcoa's ML 1SA does not impose an unacceptable impact on the environment, and advises the Minister for State Development accordingly.

If you approve the above recommendations, you may care to approve the attached draft letter to the Minister for State Development.

Yours sincerely



Walter Cox
CHAIRMAN

9 May 2003

Atts



Department of
Industry and Resources

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ENVIRONMENTAL Attachment A

PROTECTION AUTHORITY

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**CHAIRMAN
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AUTHORITY**

**MANAGEMENT OF DISTURBANCES TO CAR INFORMAL RESERVES BY
ALCOA WITHIN MINING LEASE 1SA**

I refer to the process to deal with planned mining incursions into CAR informal reserves that has been developed in discussions between the Mining and Management Program Liaison Group ("MMPLG"), Alcoa and the Environmental Protection Authority.

The agreed process meets the intent of the Regional Forest Agreement, which requires environmental assessment and transparency of process through public scrutiny. The assessment process, which includes a representative from the Conservation Council of Western Australia, was used for the first time in 2001 and subsequently in 2002 to assess areas at Alcoa's Huntly and Willowdale mines. As part of this on-going process, the assessment group met on 13 February 2003 to assess three areas at the Huntly Mine.

On advice from the CAR Informal Reserves Evaluation Committee (a sub-committee of the MMPLG), the MMPLG recommends that approval be granted to disturb three areas of CAR informal reserves at the Huntly mine, as presented on the plans and inspected on 13 February 2003.

Attached for your information is a copy of the agreed process to deal with planned mining incursions into CAR informal reserves, details of the areas planned to be disturbed and the minutes of the CAR Informal Reserves Evaluation Committee's meeting of 13 February 2003.


Mike James
CHAIRMAN
THE MINING AND MANAGEMENT PROGRAM LIAISON GROUP

20 March 2003



Environmental Protection Authority

THE HON DR JUDY EDWARDS (MLA)
MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

Dear Minister

PLANS FOR BAUXITE MINING AND HAUL ROAD STREAM CROSSING IN CAR INFORMAL RESERVES, ML 1SA: ALCOA OF AUSTRALIA

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the Environmental Protection Authority's (EPA) advice on the above plans under Section 16(e) of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*. This advice will also be made publicly available as per normal protocol.

The EPA recommendation is on page 3.

1. Introduction and background

The Commonwealth of Australia and the State of Western Australia signed the Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) on 4 May 1999. The RFA established a system of Formal and Informal Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative (CAR) Reserves. Such Reserves are located throughout the area defined as the RFA boundary, and some are within Alcoa of Australia's Mining Lease (ML) 1SA.

In consultation with the Department of Resources Development (DRD), Alcoa and the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM), the EPA and Department of Environmental Protection developed a process to review any plans by Alcoa to disturb CAR Informal Reserves in ML 1SA. This process is consistent with the requirements of the RFA and the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*. A copy of the process is attached for your information (Attachment 1).

In January 2001, Alcoa submitted plans ("the Plans") to the Mining and Management Programme Liaison Group¹ (MMPLG) to disturb a total of 8.8 hectares of vegetation within four CAR Informal Reserves, as part of proposed bauxite mining operations at its Huntly Mine. The Plans included a detailed biological assessment of each CAR Informal Reserve to be disturbed.

¹ The MMPLG, which was established by the State in 1979, oversees environmental aspects of Alcoa's mining operations in ML 1SA. The Group is represented by Alcoa, the Department of Environmental Protection, Water and Rivers Commission, Water Corporation, Department of Minerals and Energy, DRD and CALM.

The 'CAR Informal Reserves Evaluation Committee'² was formed to consider the Plans in the first instance. Following the Committee's detailed review of the Plans, and site visit of the relevant areas in March 2001, the Committee recommended to the MMPLG that Alcoa be granted approval to clear the CAR Informal Reserves as proposed. The MMPLG endorsed this advice in a letter to the EPA (see Attachment 2.)

2. Environmental acceptability of the Plans

The EPA notes that:

- all of the four CAR Informal Reserves affected by the Plans are linear stream reserves;
- Alcoa commissioned consultants to carry out vegetation, rare flora and fauna, heritage and dieback studies for each of the four CAR Informal Reserve affected by the Plans, and modified the plans in accordance with recommendations made by its consultants so as to reduce the environmental impacts;
- 0.42% of the total area of CAR Informal Reserves in the Huntly mining envelope will be impacted by the Plans;
- the Plans will not affect any rare or endangered flora and fauna;
- no heritage sites occur in the affected areas;
- any occurrences of dieback within or adjacent to the affected areas can be appropriately managed by Alcoa;
- the vegetation affected by the bauxite mining is considered to be well represented in the conservation estate;
- an acceptable vegetation buffer will be retained between the clearing line for the bauxite mining and the existing dampland vegetation;
- Alcoa will aim to rehabilitate the mining areas to a jarrah forest ecosystem as per the rehabilitation prescriptions established in the Alcoa/CALM Working Arrangements³, and will return the haul road stream crossing to natural levels and use a tailored seed mix to return species that are typical of stream zone vegetation; and
- relevant representatives from CALM, DRD, Water Corporation, Department of Minerals and Energy and Conservation Council of WA reviewed the Plans, conducted a site inspection and subsequently recommended that the Plans be approved.

Given the above, the EPA considers that the Plans do not impose an unacceptable impact on the environment.

² This is a sub-committee of the MMPLG represented by members of the Mining Operations Group (which is itself a sub-committee of the MMPLG, and represented by Alcoa, the Department of Minerals and Energy, CALM, DRD and Water Corporation) and the Conservation Council of WA. The MMPLG uses the CAR Informal Reserves Evaluation Committee to review any plans by Alcoa to disturb CAR Informal Reserves in ML 1SA, and to report its findings to the MMPLG.

³ The Working Arrangements, which are prepared by Alcoa and CALM, contain processes and procedures on how Alcoa and CALM operate within State Forest, and are reviewed bi-annually. The Arrangements cover issues such as forest hygiene, logging protocols, dieback identification protocols and reporting of any rare or endangered flora and fauna species.

3. Recommendations

The EPA recommends to the Minister for Environment and Heritage that:

1. The Minister notes Attachment 1, i.e. "Processes for the approval of Alcoa's Mining and Management Plans, and the review by the EPA of MMPLG advice to disturb CAR Informal Reserves in Alcoa's ML 1SA".
2. The Minister notes the EPA's conclusion that the Plans by Alcoa to disturb 8.8 ha of vegetation within four CAR Informal Reserves in ML 1SA do not impose an unacceptable impact on the environment.
3. The Minister accepts the EPA advice that the disturbance of four CAR Informal Reserves in Alcoa's ML 1SA does not impose an unacceptable impact on the environment and advises the Minister for State Development accordingly.

If you approve the above recommendations, you may care to approve the attached draft letter to the Minister for State Development.

Yours sincerely



Bernard Bowen
CHAIRMAN

23 April 2001

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