

Application for Exploration Licence 74/132, Ravensthorpe Range

Outokumpu Exploration Australia Pty Ltd

**Report and recommendation of the
Environmental Protection Authority**

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Ravensthorpe Range**

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Foreword

The Environmental Protection Authority has recently reviewed the issue of mineral tenement applications and concluded that provided no significant ground-disturbing activity was undertaken the grant of title could generally be environmentally acceptable for the majority of applications. This approach was adopted in the Environmental Protection Authority's recently released Bulletin 508, April 1991, dealing with an exploration licence application at Basil Road, east of Albany. The current report continues this approach.

The Environmental Protection Authority has decided to streamline the referral and assessment procedures in a way which is consistent with the policy "Resolution of Conflict: A Clear Policy for National Parks". This means that no new applications for exploration tenements will be considered for National Parks.

In future, the Environmental Protection Authority does not intend to assess new applications for the granting of tenements in environmentally sensitive areas provided that a condition is attached to the tenement requiring an exploration activity programme to be referred to the Environmental Protection Authority, under Part IV Section 38 of the Environmental Protection Act, prior to any significant ground-disturbing activity occurring. Other environmentally significant areas not covered by the policy may also occasionally be determined by the Environmental Protection Authority and similar procedures will be applied.

The Environmental Protection Authority also has a number of existing applications for which a formal level of assessment has already been set. While a formal report is required for the granting stage for each of these, the Environmental Protection Authority considers that the same principles should apply. Consequently, this report finds that grant of title could be environmentally acceptable. If any significant ground-disturbing activity is subsequently proposed such activity will be referred to the Environmental Protection Authority.

1. Introduction

Outokumpu Exploration Australia Pty. Ltd, the proponent, has applied for Exploration Licence 74/132 which is located within Ravensthorpe Range, east of Kundip (Figure 1). The application was referred to the Environmental Protection Authority by the Department of Mines because it is in the proposed Ravensthorpe Range Nature Reserve, which was the subject of Environmental Protection Authority Red Book recommendation 3.8. The exploration licence application also impinges on two existing reserves, Kundip Nature Reserve ("C" 31128) and Reserve 31760 (for park and protection of river and foreshore). The Environmental Protection Authority is assessing the proposal to grant the exploration licence at this stage. Any ground-disturbing activities which may ensue if active exploration is proposed after the title is granted would subsequently be evaluated by the Environmental Protection Authority.

In the South Coast Region Draft Management Plan, the Department of Conservation and Land Management proposed that the Ravensthorpe Range be vested in the National Parks and Nature Conservation Authority under Section 5g of the Conservation and Land Management Act allowing for multiple use to occur under the management of the Department of Conservation and Land Management. This land use proposal has not been endorsed by the Government. The proponent has agreed to the excision of Reserve 31128 and Reserve 31760 from the application. The majority of the remainder of the application area is vacant Crown land and there are two areas of private land. Under the new government policy, "Resolution of Conflict: A Clear Policy for National Parks", all of this land subject to Red Book recommendation will be treated as "C" class nature reserve.

2. The proposal

An exploration licence (described in Part IV, Sections 57 to 70 of the Mining Act 1978) allows the licensee to explore for minerals in or under the land. The granting of the licence by the Minister for Mines provides the holder of the licence with security of tenure for five years and the right to enter the licence area to conduct exploration according to conditions placed on the licence. On grant of the licence the Department of Mines has regulatory power via conditions on the licence and requires a security or a bond to ensure that rehabilitation is completed to an acceptable standard. Many of the conditions relate to environmental protection issues (Appendix 1).

3. Existing environment

Ravensthorpe Range has a series of low hills of Precambrian granite, migmatite gneiss and greenstones. The Range has a very rocky surface dissected by many gullies, and the vegetation varies from low woodland with a sparse understorey to dense mallee scrub.

The flora of the Ravensthorpe Range and its immediate vicinity is well known. It contains many species not known from the surrounding country; some are endemic, others are common here but rare elsewhere. The Department of Conservation and Land Management has commented that the application area is extremely important floristically and is likely to contain rare flora.

Both the Western Australian Museum and the Department of Conservation and Land Management have indicated the importance of the area in terms of both flora and fauna. The Heath Rat (*Pseudomys shortridgii*), thought to be extinct, has recently been rediscovered in this area.

Any future proposals for ground-disturbance would therefore require careful scrutiny.

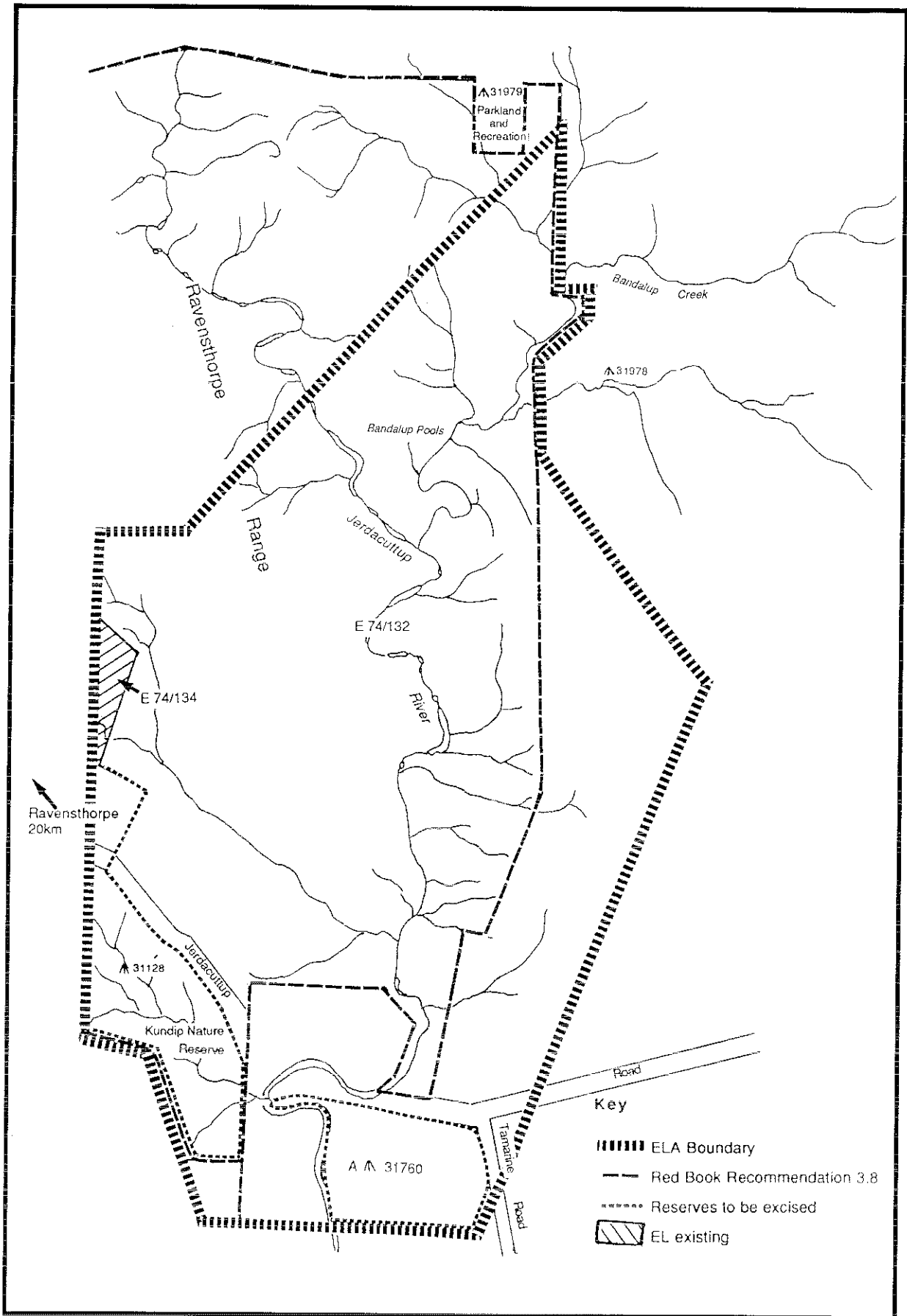


Figure 1: Location of exploration licence application 74/132

4. Assessment and recommendation

The Environmental Protection Authority has assessed the proposal to grant exploration licence 74/132. It partially impinges upon two conservation reserves, therefore a formal level of assessment was set at Consultative Environmental Review under the government procedures prevailing at the time. The assessment process focused on identifying significant environmental issues that would prohibit the grant of the licence. Since none were identified, the Environmental Protection Authority considers that the licence may be granted with provision for specific assessment of the actual exploration programme, if it involves significant ground-disturbance, at a later date.

The conclusion that no environmental issues likely to prevent granting of the licence have been identified was reached following consultation with various public and governmental agencies. Consulted groups include Ravensthorpe Shire, Department of Mines, Western Australian Museum, Department of Conservation and Land Management, Conservation Council of Western Australia, Water Authority of Western Australia, and Department of Land Administration. Most of the licence area is regarded as being environmentally sensitive as reflected in Red Book recommendation 3.8. Actual exploration proposals will be very closely examined by the Environmental Protection Authority before any significant ground-disturbing activity is contemplated.

The key environmental issues identified include dieback disease control, protection of rare flora and fauna, preservation of any sites of archaeological or ethnographic significance, fire management, rehabilitation and reporting. The Department of Mines proposes to place a schedule of conditions on the licence (Appendix 1), which incorporates the Department of Conservation and Land Management's Conditions for Exploration in Conservation Lands despite the fact that the land is not yet under their management. These conditions require that no significant ground-disturbing exploration occurs until the approval of the State Mining Engineer, Department of Mines, is obtained in agreement with the Regional Manager, Department of Conservation and Land Management, and the proposal is referred to the Environmental Protection Authority under Part IV Section 38 of the Environmental Protection Act. The conditions also require compliance with the provisions of the Aboriginal Heritage Act, 1972. In addition, the conditions require that the standard of rehabilitation be to the satisfaction of the State Mining Engineer, Department of Mines, in agreement with the Regional Manager, Department of Conservation and Land Management, and the Environmental Protection Authority.

The proposed conditions address the key environmental issues and the Environmental Protection Authority considers that the proposal to grant title is environmentally acceptable. The Authority considers that any proposals for ground disturbance will require very careful consideration. The only factor not adequately addressed is the unresolved status of the land and, until the tenure of the land is vested with the National Parks and Nature Conservation Authority, the Environmental Protection Authority considers that approval for any significant ground-disturbing exploration activity should rest with the Minister for the Environment.

The Environmental Protection Authority notes that if significant ground-disturbing exploration activity occurs, the key issues would be dieback disease control, flora and fauna protection, rehabilitation and Aboriginal sites preservation. The following recommendation is based upon this observation.

Recommendation

The Environmental Protection Authority concludes that the proposal to grant Exploration Licence 74/132 is environmentally acceptable subject to no significant ground-disturbing activity occurring until such activity is referred to the Environmental Protection Authority under Part IV Section 38 of the Environmental Protection Act.

Appendix 1

Department of Mines

**Proposed Schedule of Conditions for
Exploration Licence 74/132**

Standard conditions

1. The grant of this licence not inferring automatic approval to mine or the subsequent grant of a mining lease in accordance with Section 75 of the Mining Act.
2. Prior to any significant ground-disturbing activity, the licensee preparing a detailed programme for each phase of proposed exploration for approval of the Regional Mining Engineer in agreement with the Regional Manager, Department of Conservation and Land Management and for referral to the Environmental Protection Authority under Part IV Section 38 of the *Environmental Protection Act*. This programme to include :
 - i) Maps and/or aerial photographs showing the proposed locations of all roads, tracks, camps, costeans and other disturbances;
 - ii) The purpose, specifications and life of such roads, tracks, disturbances, etc;
 - iii) Descriptions of all vegetation types (in general terms), land forms, and unusual features likely to be disturbed by such proposed disturbances. The Regional Manager, Department of Conservation and Land Management, specifying the level of vegetation description;
 - iv) Proposals which may disturb any declared rare or geographically restricted flora and fauna;
 - v) Techniques, prescriptions, and timetable for rehabilitation of all proposed disturbances;
 - vi) Undertaking for corrective measures for failed rehabilitation;
 - vii) Details of water requirements from within the reserve;
 - viii) Details of refuse disposal;
 - ix) Proposals for instruction and supervision of personnel and contractors in respect to environmental conditions; and
 - x) Description of the environmental impacts and programmes for their management .
3. Unless the written approval of the State Mining Engineer, Department of Mines, is first obtained, the use of scrapers, graders, bulldozers, backhoes or other mechanised equipment for surface clearing or the excavation of costeans is prohibited.

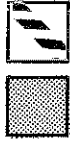
Following approval, all topsoil being removed ahead of mining operations and separately stockpiled for replacement after backfilling and/or completion of operations.
4. The licensee, at his expense, capping or filling all holes drilled, rehabilitating all areas cleared or otherwise disturbed and backfilling all volumes excavated during the term of the licence to the satisfaction of the State Mining Engineer in agreement with the Regional Manager, Department of Conservation and Land Management and the Environmental Protection Authority. Backfilling and rehabilitation being required no later than six months after excavation unless otherwise approved in writing by the State Mining Engineer. Holes are to be capped or filled immediately after completion.
5. At agreed intervals, not greater than 12 monthly, the licensee reporting to the State Mining Engineer and the Regional Manager, Department of Conservation and Land Management, on the progress of the operation and the rehabilitation programme.
6. The Regional/State Manager, Department of Conservation and Land Management, being supplied with an itinerary and programme of the locations of operations on the licence area and informed at least seven days in advance of any changes to that itinerary.

7. The licensee complying with and ensuring that all persons under its control operating in the licence area are aware of and comply with the provisions of:
 - i) the *Conservation and Land Management Act*, 1984, and the Regulations thereunder;
 - ii) the *Bush Fires Act*, 1954-77, and the Regulations thereunder; and
 - iii) the *Wildlife Conservation Act*, 1950, as amended, and the Regulations thereunder (excepting the Regulations 46 a, b, c, d, g l, L and O, insofar as non-compliance occurs as an unavoidable incident or reasonable consequence in the performance of the approved exploration programme);
 - iv) the *Aboriginal Heritage Act*, 1972, and the Regulations thereunder.
8. The licensee ensuring that, where required by the Regional/State Manager, Department of Conservation and Land Management, all vehicles and equipment entering the reserve are washed down to remove soil and plant propagules and adhering to such conditions specified by the Regional/State Manager, Department of Conservation and Land Management, for the prevention of the spread of soil-borne diseases.
9. Access to and from and the movement of vehicles within the licence area being restricted to roads and tracks approved under the programme or otherwise agreed by the Regional Manager, Department of Conservation and Land Management.
10. Prior to the cessation of the exploration/prospecting activity, the licensee notifying the State Mining Engineer and the Regional Manager, Department of Conservation and Land Management, and arranging an inspection as required.
11. All waste material, rubbish, plastic sample bags, abandoned equipment and temporary buildings being removed from the mining tenement prior to or at the termination of the exploration programme.
12. The licensee making provisions to prevent spillage of fuel and discharge of pollutants generally and for all exploration sites being kept free from any rubbish and being left in a clean and tidy state.
13. The licensee not establishing any camp, base works or area, fuelling depot or similar establishment on the licence area unless the site and access has received prior approval of the Regional Manager, Department of Conservation and Land Management.
14. No soap, detergent or other foaming agent being used in any watercourse or rockhole nor any rubbish or other polluting material being deposited in any watercourse or rockhole.
15. Domestic animals, traps or firearms not being taken onto the Reserve.
16. Such further conditions for protection of the land environment and rehabilitation of the land as the Minister for Mines may from time to time impose.
17. The licensee, at his expense, rehabilitating specified areas disturbed by previous mining activity to the satisfaction of the Regional Mining Engineer in consultation with the Regional Manager, Department of Conservation and Land Management.

Condition specific to Exploration Licence 74/132

18. The complete excision of any portion encroaching on Reserve 31128 or Reserve 31760.

Excised reserves
Tement area



Legend:

