

EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION AND CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT

Natural resource management and conservation

Newmont and the Peel-Harvey Catchment Council have a longstanding partnership that is supporting more effective catchment management in the Peel Region in Western Australia. This partnership will contribute to SDG6 – Clean water and sanitation: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. It also supports SDG12 – Responsible consumption and production. Newmont and Peel-Harvey Catchment Council have entered into a Community Investment Agreement—recently signed and building on many years of cooperative engagement—working to support enhanced catchment management in the fragile Peel-Harvey Catchment.



6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



The Community Investment Agreement provides a comprehensive set of actions that will support better integration of traditional ecological knowledge into catchment planning, build community and local landowner capacity to design and deliver sustainable agricultural practices and establish a baseline of river health for the Hotham and Williams Rivers and tributaries.

Relevant Australian SDG6 indicators include: level of water stress: freshwater withdrawal as a proportion of available freshwater resources

Global drivers for SDG6 – Clean water and sanitation

Efforts to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation are more important than ever as global water resources come under increasing pressure. Increasing urbanisation, population growth, extreme weather events, climate change, pollution and other factors are key challenges. Recognising these challenges, the UN General Assembly declared a new 'International Decade for Action on *Water for Sustainable Development*' from March 2018.¹

The Australian SDGs Hub for Business identifies actions businesses can take to support SDG6. These include measuring and minimising water use, understanding and minimising water risks and engaging in collaborative water stewardship initiatives.²

SDG6 in Australia

Managing water resources on the driest inhabited continent on earth is inherently complex, and water management and access is an ongoing priority for all Australian governments.³

Australia responds to these challenges in innovative ways, developing integrated water governance arrangements that balance economic, social and environmental considerations. For example, Australia hosts the largest integrated catchment management program in the world—the Murray-Darling Basin Initiative—covering an area of over one million square kilometres.⁴ Lessons from this initiative continue to provide insights for other resources management programs across the country.

Water scarcity and security of supply is a critical business risk for Australia's mining sector, which in turn has an important role to play in the sustainable management of water resources.⁵ Recent sector-wide efforts have focused on water stewardship, including enhanced transparency and accountability regarding water use, proactive stakeholder engagement and collaboration and adoption of catchment-based approaches.⁶

'Water stewardship' is defined as 'The use of water that is socially equitable, environmentally sustainable and economically beneficial, achieved through a stakeholder-inclusive process that involves site and catchment-based actions'.⁷



Newmont Mining Corporation

Newmont is a leading gold producer headquartered in Colorado, USA. Newmont prides itself on its commitment to sustainable, responsible resource development and RobecoSAM's Corporate Sustainability Assessment named Newmont overall industry sustainability leader in 2018.⁸

Newmont's Australian operations span Western Australia (Boddington and Kalgoorlie) and the Northern Territory (Tanami). The company also manages two legacy sites—Mt Leyshon in Queensland and Woodcutters in the Northern Territory. In 2017 Newmont employed 4,423 staff and contractors, increased Aboriginal employment to 6.7 per cent and invested more than A\$2.3 million in training and development.⁹

Newmont achieved a 1 per cent reduction in freshwater use across its Australian Operations in 2017.¹⁰

About the Peel-Harvey Catchment

Located on the lands of the Noogar people, the Peel-Harvey Catchment is a 1.17 million hectare area covering the entire surface water catchment of the Peel-Harvey estuarine system. The Hotham-Williams is the upper portion of the Peel-Harvey surface water Catchment and makes up almost half of the Peel-Harvey Catchment.¹¹

As the largest operating gold mine in Australia, Newmont Boddington Gold (NBG) employs approximately 1,850 employees and contractors. The mine is located 16 kilometres from the town of Boddington, approximately in the centre of the Peel-Harvey Catchment. NBG was established shortly after gold was discovered at the site in 1980.

One of the largest custodians of land in the South West of Western Australia, Newmont has an operational footprint of 5,000 hectares and landholdings of approximately 30,000. These holdings include including native forest, plantation and agricultural land. The operation is licensed to extract and store up to 15 gigalitres of water per annum from the Hotham River, subject to water flow limits and results of ongoing eco-system health monitoring of the river and surrounding riparian vegetation.

¹ United Nations, Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 21 December 2016, UN, 7 February 2017.

² Global Compact Network Australia, SDG6, United Nations Global Compact, viewed 3 October 2018.

³ Australian Government, The Australian continent, Australian Government, viewed 15 October 2018.

⁴ Australian Government, Murray-Darling Basin Authority, Australian Government, viewed 2 October 2018.

⁵ Sustainable Minerals Institute and Minerals Council of Australia, Water Accounting Framework, SMI and MCA, January 2014.

⁶ International Council on Mining and Metals, Water management, ICMM, viewed 2 October 2018.

⁷ Alliance for Water Stewardship, Impacts of Alliance for Water Stewardship, AWS, viewed 2 October 2018.

⁸ RobecoSAM, Industry Leaders 2018, Robeco SAM, viewed 2 October 2018.

⁹ Newmont Australia, 2017 Sustainability Summary Beyond the Mine – Australia Region Summary, Newmont Australia, Perth, p. 1.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Peel Harvey Catchment Council, Our Catchment, PHCC, viewed 2 October 2018.

While a key tourist and recreational destination, the catchment system face significant challenges. The western third of the catchment remains heavily forested, yet clearing has occurred across 80 per cent of the central and eastern catchment for agricultural production (sometimes known as the Western Wheatbelt). Changes to vegetation density led to rising water tables and land salinisation.

Ongoing pressures—including a rapidly expanding population in the coastal plain—have prompted innovative actions and partnerships to preserve this precious ecosystem and prevent future decline.¹²

A catchment is an area where water is collected by the natural landscape. Integrated water catchment management is the coordinated management of land, water and biodiversity resources based on catchment areas, incorporating environmental, economic and social considerations.¹³

The Peel–Harvey Catchment Council

Peel–Harvey Catchment Council (PHCC) is a not-for-profit, community-based Natural Resource Management (NRM) organisation promoting an integrated approach to catchment management. PHCC emphasises partnerships and works with landholders, community groups, industry and all levels of government.

PHCC's activities address sustainable natural resource management, including the effects of climate change, river and wetland restoration, biodiversity protection, sustainable agriculture and building community capacity.¹⁴

Background to the Newmont Boddington Gold / Peel–Harvey Catchment Council Partnership

NBG and PHCC first worked together in 2011 as members of the Hotham–Williams Catchment Environmental Alliance (HWCEA), a community group focused on catchment-level responses. HWCEA members included a broad range of stakeholders: local Landcare groups, resource sector companies, Traditional Owners, environmental organisations, local government representatives, local schools, universities and community members.

After many years of strong support and community-level projects, public investment in Landcare in the Hotham–Williams Catchment declined. Supporting its mandate to prioritise community-based projects, HWCEA approached the PHCC in 2012 for support to reinvigorate Landcare in the catchment area. Through the HWCEA, Newmont requested the group look to develop a comprehensive natural resource management business case study to identify key actions underpinning long-term Landcare support in the catchment. PHCC welcomed the initiative, working with HWCEA to develop the business case study.

The study found further work was required to define priorities and guide future public and private investment. PHCC then applied for and secured four years of Australian Government Biodiversity Funding.

The funding, supplemented by local in-kind assistance, supported activities such as Landcare works, community awareness building and re-establishment of a NRM officer in Boddington to service the Hotham–Williams sub-catchment.

These projects delivered positive outcomes and reinforced the importance of a strategic approach to identify and

implement community priorities and maintain a NRM presence in the community. NRM and Landcare are again now firmly part of the Hotham–Williams community.

A new phase of collaboration: the Newmont Boddington Gold–PHCC Community Investment Agreement

In 2017, PHCC and Newmont built on this relationship by entering into a new five year Community Investment Agreement—the *Hotham–Williams Rivers & Tributaries' Natural Resource Management and Conservation Project*. Through the agreement, Newmont is supporting the PHCC to manage and deliver projects that aim to strengthen catchment management across the Hotham–Williams region. Key aspects include:

- Employment of a Landcare officer to oversee activities in the Hotham–Williams Catchment
- Development of a River Action Plan for the Hotham and Williams Rivers and tributaries that address natural, conservation and cultural resource management knowledge gaps. The plan will capture Aboriginal cultural perspectives, outline further studies to establish a baseline of river health and inform future research collaborations.
- Collaboration with Noongar elders and community members to incorporate traditional ecological knowledge into catchment planning
- Delivery of biosecurity activities, including education and training of local community groups and landholders and support for a new biosecurity group in the upper catchment
- Community capacity building activities to support for future land management. These will include conservation workshops, accredited skills development courses for



¹² Department of Water and Environmental Regulation, Peel – Harvey Estuary, Government of Western Australia, viewed 10 October 2018.

¹³ Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Catchment Management Framework, Victoria State Government, viewed 10 October 2018.

¹⁴ Peel–Harvey Catchment Council, What we Do, PHCC, viewed 2 October 2018.



Photos: Peel-Harvey Catchment Council and Newmont

This case study demonstrates the practice of *Enduring Value*:

- Principle 2: Integrate sustainable development principles into company policies and practices
- Principle 4: Implement risk management strategies based on valid data and sound science
- Principle 6: Seek continual improvement of our environmental performance
- Principle 7: Contribute to conservation of biodiversity and integrated approaches to land use planning
- Principle 9: Contribute to the social, economic and institutional development of the communities in which we operate.

Newmont's neighbouring landholders and Aboriginal stakeholders and local community planting events focused on priority catchment areas.

- Restoration projects for the Hotham and Williams Rivers and tributaries including invasive weed control, riparian vegetation and community planting days
- Development and delivery of a landowner grants program to support sustainable agricultural activities across the catchment.

Key outcomes

NBG's agreement with PHCC is the culmination of many years of collaboration and partnership. This partnership began as an informal relationship developed via the HWCEA and now supports a formal partnership that will deliver beneficial and sustainable environmental and social outcomes for the region.

The partnership will enable host communities, Aboriginal Elders and groups, Landcare groups and farmers to define develop their own priorities and approach to catchment management.

Funding investment from NBG to support the employment of NRM officer[s] enabled PHCC to attract other significant funding for on-ground and engagement works. This additional support would have been unlikely if PHCC had to also build in the costs of an officer to deliver them. The investment has also helped support other local groups to attract investment as well.

Together, this partnership demonstrates the importance of cross-sector engagement between various organisations to support social capital and ensure local ownership and decision.

Lessons

- Investing time and resources in relationships with environmental and other community partners supports constructive long-term approaches to complex challenges
- NBG's agreement with the PHCC is the culmination of many years of collaboration and partnership, starting with an informal alliance developed via Hotham-Williams Catchment Environmental Alliance and developing into a formal partnership supporting beneficial outcomes for both parties
- Demonstrating a community-led approach to NRM, research funded by the NBG-PHCC Agreement will support the current Hotham-Williams NRM Plan and lead to further work to support community priorities. The partnership is enabling environmental baseline studies and river health monitoring to occur where there were otherwise no resources to do so.
- The focus on cross-sector engagement—NGOs, community, educators and school children, private sector industry, and all levels of government—is fostering cooperation across the Catchment and supporting a grassroots approach to NRM
- Investment occurring in the right areas enables additional funding to be sourced, maximising the value of the original investment.