

## South32 Worsley Alumina Proposed Mining Expansion Peel-Harvey Catchment Council Position Statement



*The environmental and socio economic values of the northern Jarrah Forest, including threatened black cockatoos and nature-based tourism, are at risk from South32's proposed mining expansion  
(Photo credit: PHCC and Josh Cowling)*

**South32 Worsley Alumina have released its Public Environmental Review (PER) documents seeking approval to clear 4,399 hectares of native vegetation (including Jarrah Forest) to expand its bauxite mining operations near Boddington and their alumina refinery near Collie.**

**The proposed expansion will have serious direct and cumulative social, economic and ecological impacts. This Position Statement outlines what is at risk and why it is important for community to have their say.**

**You have until 15<sup>th</sup> August 2022 to have your say**

Our northern Jarrah Forest and the waterways within it are important for a multitude of reasons. They are environmental, culturally, economically and socially significant. The plants and animals within the South West region are internationally renowned and recognized as one of the richest biodiversity regions in the world. The Jarrah Forest lies within the Southwest Biodiversity Hotspot which forms one of 36 global biodiversity hotspots, where exceptional concentrations of endemic species of plants and animals are undergoing exceptional loss of habitat. Within the Hotham-Williams subsystem alone, there are 31 threatened fauna species, including the State's fauna emblem, the Numbat. The forests are critical habitats for a range of threatened species, including mainland quokkas and all three species of black cockatoo.

Mature Jarrah Forest is almost impossible to restore to its original state and clearing of a further 4,399 hectares of native vegetation will have a significant environmental impact, as will the increased groundwater and surface water use.

Along with its conservation values, the Jarrah Forest has long been highly valued by the Noongar people, then European settlers. The Forest supports water and wood production, recreation, community well-being, acts as major carbon storage for climate mitigation, and contains significant ecological linkages. The area is increasingly popular for nature based tourism, with major walk and mountain bike trails such as the Bibbulman Track and Munda Biddi and areas like Jarrahdale and Dwellingup being popular tourist destinations for swimming, mountain biking, climbing, camping and bushwalking. It has a long history of

timber harvesting and intensive mining for minerals such as bauxite, gold and tin. The 2021 announcement by the State Government that native forest timber harvesting will end in WA by 2024 is recognition of the many other values of these forests and the need for forest recovery from a history of intense use.

Worsley's Environmental Review Document is based around 14 key environmental factors, being those parts of the environment that may be impacted by an aspect of a project. Listed below are the factors, and the PHCC key concerns:

Theme	Factor	PHCC Key Concerns
<b>Land</b>	Flora and Vegetation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4,399 ha native vegetation clearing with a significantly larger area of fragmentation - the majority falls within the Hotham-Williams Subsystem of the Peel Harvey Catchment.</li> <li>• Impacts to loss of biodiversity at a local and regional scale.</li> <li>• Loss of key ecological corridors and habitat linkages, particularly for ground dwelling species.</li> <li>• Cumulative impacts</li> <li>• Potential impacts to Eucalypt Woodlands of the Western Australian Wheatbelt Threatened Ecological Community.</li> <li>• Potential impacts to riparian (along the rivers) areas as key corridors and linkages.</li> </ul>
	Terrestrial Fauna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impacts on Matters of National Environmental Significance species including Black Cockatoos (Forest Red-tailed, Carnaby's and Baudin's), Woylie, Chuditch, Red-tailed Phascogale, Western Ringtail Possum, Quokka, Numbat.</li> <li>• Immediate habitat loss for all fauna species which inhabit the PAA.</li> <li>• Fragmentation of linkages causing isolation of habitat areas/patches.</li> <li>• Loss of feeding and breeding habitat for Black Cockatoos.</li> <li>• Fauna injury and loss during clearing and ongoing operations.</li> <li>• Increase competition and predation by other native species and also introduced species due to habitat areas decreasing in size, making fauna more vulnerable.</li> <li>• Secondary impacts from dust, noise and vibrations including impacts to breeding.</li> </ul>
	Terrestrial Environmental Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management of forest disease to ensure no spread or introduction of disease.</li> <li>• Soil impacts including Soil erosion from clearing and management, (including clearing hilltops); Loss of soil health due to changes in soil structure; and Salinisation due to rising water table from clearing.</li> </ul>
<b>Water</b>	Inland Waters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The sub-catchments of the Primary Assessment Area (PAA) include the Hotham River Catchment (directly), Williams River Catchment (regionally), Murray River Catchment (regionally) and the Peel-Yalgorup System – Ramsar 482 (internationally significant). The majority of the PAA is within the Hotham-Williams Subsystem of the Peel Harvey Catchment, of which only 7% of waterways in this subsystem are in good/neat pristine condition.</li> </ul>

Theme	Factor	PHCC Key Concerns
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct clearing impacts on waterways includes, Groundwater level changes; Erosion of riverbanks and scouring of streams; Increases in salinity due to cumulative clearing impacts; Sedimentation and turbid waters through clearing impacts, Waterway contamination from spills or storm water runoff from clearing areas.</li> <li>• Altered flow regimes and water quality causing impacts to aquatic fauna and overall waterway health.</li> <li>• Disturbance to riparian areas from Hotham River crossings construction.</li> </ul>
<b>Air</b>	Air Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate change impacts from emissions.</li> <li>• Secondary impacts from dust i.e. light penetration to plants and animal health</li> </ul>
<b>People</b>	Social Surroundings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heritage Places, including impact on waterways and drinking water catchments, Hotham River which is a registered heritage site; and downstream impacts on the Murray River and ultimately the Internationally Significant Peel-Yalorgup Wetlands, (Global Ramsar Site 482).</li> <li>• Overall visual impacts and connections with the environment may be lost.</li> <li>• Climate change impacts from emissions and biodiversity loss on human health, well-being, increase in intensity and frequency of extreme weather events, changes to fire patterns.</li> </ul>

## How to have your say

You can have your say in several ways through the EPA website: <https://consultation.epa.wa.gov.au/> - Look for Worsley Mine Expansion – Revised Proposal – Public Environmental Review

You can find more information on the Worsley Mine Development Overview, Fact Sheets and Documents at [www.south32.net/worsleyminedevelopment](http://www.south32.net/worsleyminedevelopment)

## PHCC's position

*PHCC has serious concerns about the proposed expansion, from local and regional scale impacts and direct and cumulative social, economic and ecological impacts.*

A key focus of PHCC is to address the cause of actions which may have a negative impact throughout the catchment, to make evidence-based decisions for positive social and environmental change. We also aim to ensure our actions and submissions align with ours and our stakeholders responsibility to meets national and international obligations for biodiversity and climate change, from local to global issues.

## Climate Change and Biodiversity Loss

The Jarrah Forest provides a major carbon store that helps mitigate climate change impacts. The latest global scientific evidence establishes that prevention of the loss of biodiversity, such as that within the jarrah forest is critical to addressing climate change (<https://ipbes.net/assessment-reports/ldr>). With reduced rainfall, impacts to groundwater and rising temperatures in the southwest, the northern Jarrah Forest is already climatically under stress. Expansion of clearing and degradation further places the forest's values at risk and raises concerns as to the viability and increased water use of establishing rehabilitation.

## What we will doing

The PHCC will be preparing an evidence and value based submission on Worsley's expansion proposal.

Throughout the process we will be encouraging people to have their say, providing updates and release of our draft submission before the 8 week review period closes.

## For more information

You can find more information on the proposal below and how to make a submission on the EPA page at <https://consultation.epa.wa.gov.au/open-for-submissions/worsley-expansion-revised-per/>

Information sheets released by South32 can be found at: <https://www.south32.net/our-business/australia/worsley-alumina/worsley-alumina-mine/worsley-fact-sheets>

A map of the area can be found at: [https://www.south32.net/docs/default-source/worsley-fact-sheets/01-fact-sheet-september---overview.pdf?sfvrsn=4192addf\\_12](https://www.south32.net/docs/default-source/worsley-fact-sheets/01-fact-sheet-september---overview.pdf?sfvrsn=4192addf_12)

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*We acknowledge the Noongar people as Traditional Custodians of this land and pay our respects to all Elders past and present*