

PHCC Position Statement

Alcoa Proposed Mining and Refinery Expansions

More than 40,000 ha Forest clearing

Have your say before Thursday 21 August 2025



The environmental and socio- economic values of the Northern Jarrah Forest, including threatened black cockatoos and nature-based tourism, are at risk from Alcoa's proposed activities

(Photo credit: PHCC and Josh Cowling)

The EPA has released Alcoa's Public Environmental Review (PER) documents seeking approval to clear over 40,000 hectares of forest to expand its bauxite mining operations on the Darling Range and their alumina refinery at Pinjarra.

The proposed expansion will have serious direct and cumulative social, economic and ecological impacts.

This Position Statement outlines PHCC's position on what is at risk and why it is important for community to participate in the environmental review of these proposals.

You have until Thursday 21 August 2025 to have your say.

Alcoa's Pinjarra Alumina Refinery Expansion proposal includes clearing of **1,396 ha** within a **3,241 ha** refinery development envelope, and an increase in clearing of **7,500 ha** within a **23,900 ha** mine development envelope. Including clearing that has been authorised through other state processes, that's nearly **9,000 ha** of clearing across more than **50,000 ha**.

Alcoa's Mining and Management Plans 2022-2026 and 2023-2027 proposals include clearing of **14,634 ha** within a **41,184 ha** mine development envelope. Including clearing that has been authorised through other

state processes, that's over **30,000 ha** of clearing across **93,000 ha**. There's also another **178,340 ha** subject to 'low impact exploration activities'¹.

The three proposals have been consolidated into two proposals, and the public environmental review period has been opened concurrently by the EPA.

That's a total of **40,560 ha** of clearing, across a footprint of almost **150,000 ha, plus exploration**.

Cumulative Impact

Mining expansions include recent approval for 3,855 ha for South32's Worsley mine expansion near Boddington, a current referral for Newmont Boddington Gold of around 2,000 ha and Alcoa will be seeking more mining approvals to clear more forest, after 2027. Their current proposal to clear 40,560 ha cannot be considered in isolation, and cumulative impacts of existing and proposed clearing needs to be assessed in the context of past, present and future clearing.

Our Northern Jarrah Forest and the waterways within it are important for a multitude of reasons. They are environmentally, 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 Northern 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.

The Northern Jarrah Forest is renowned for its high species richness and ecosystem diversity, as well as a high number of endemic species (occurring over a range of less than 100 km). More than 780 species of plants are known, along with 235 species of terrestrial vertebrates. There are many rare and threatened species including orchids, frogs, birds (including three black cockatoo species and Muir's corella) and mammals (including southern brown bandicoot, chuditch, dibbler, two species of phascogale, mainland quokka, numbat, woylie, tammar wallaby and western ringtail possum). There are also 8 Threatened Ecological Communities, and 9 migratory species.

The cover of native forest is a rarity in the south-west of WA, where more than 70% of the vegetation has been cleared since Europeans arrived. More than 40% of the Northern Jarrah Forest has already been cleared², and there are plans already approved for more clearing.

For more information on the values of the Northern Jarrah Forest, current threats, and our response to Alcoa's proposals, see our website at <https://peel-harvey.org.au/alcoa-per/>

How to have your say

You can have your say in several ways through the EPA website: <https://consultation.epa.wa.gov.au/open-for-submissions/pinjarra-alumina-revised-bauxite-mining-per/>

¹ These areas have been calculated from the figures published in the Proposal Content Documents on the EPA website, but total areas are expressed differently throughout the documents and have changed over time as the assessments have been amended. Figures are subject to confirmation.

²

https://www.epa.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/EPA_Report/EPA%20Report%201768%20Worsley%20Mine%20Expansion_0.pdf



You can find more information on the Alcoa assessments at <https://www.alcoa.com/australia/en/sustainability/environmental-assessments>

You can also find out more about the proposal and guidance on how to make a submission from the WA Forest Alliance <https://wafa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/18072025-WAFA-Alcoa-PER-guide.pdf>, or you can sign up to WAFA's submission <https://endforestmining.org.au/alcoa/>

For more information about how mining impacts the Northern Jarrah Forest, see https://www.ccwa.org.au/a_thousand_cuts_mining_in_the_northern_jarrah_forests

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.

PHCC is an independent not-for-profit organization with a focus on science and the environment. We are contracted to the Australian Government as a Regional Delivery Partner, and we have been working in the Northern Jarrah Forest for nearly three decades.

PHCC does not support clearing such a large area of native vegetation within an even larger development envelope for bauxite mining and alumina refining. We are concerned that ongoing clearing in the Northern Jarrah Forest will lead to ecological disaster, to the extent that it may drive some species to extinction.

The overall scale of impact from the proposals represents unacceptable loss and destruction to EPA factors including flora and vegetation, terrestrial environmental quality, terrestrial fauna, inland waters, and social surroundings.

The proposals do not properly apply the mitigation hierarchy of avoid > minimise > rehabilitate > offset. Areas claimed as avoided will be subject to future mining, and the practice of leaving a small buffer around streams, granite outcrops and individual trees simply increases the indirect impacts of clearing into those areas.

There is a lack of certainty in rehabilitation success, with no areas to date achieving the completion criteria relating to biodiversity and recent research clearly showing that Alcoa's rehabilitation is on a declining trajectory³. Rehabilitated jarrah forest cannot replace the old, biodiverse, functioning ecosystem of the Northern Jarrah Forest.

The proposals rely heavily on offsets to make up for the significant impact to the environment. These offsets do not address the net loss of ecosystems, biodiversity and habitat. Offsets have not been successfully achieved in the Northern Jarrah Forest yet, and we have no confidence that they can be.

There is no end to the cumulative impact that the Northern Jarrah Forest is facing. Apart from Alcoa's proposals, there are other mining tenements for bauxite and for gold. There is basic raw material abstraction, water abstraction, and clearing for agriculture and horticulture. There is climate change, disease and bushfire. There is illegal logging, dumping, and hunting. In the face of these cumulative impacts, large scale clearing is a fast-track to losing the Northern Jarrah Forest.

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

³ <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/rec.14236>



ensure our actions and submissions align with ours and our stakeholders' responsibility to meet national and international obligations for biodiversity and climate change, from local to global issues.

We know that it costs more to repair the damage than the profit that can be gained by clearing the jarrah forest.

Climate Change and Biodiversity Loss

The Northern 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 about the viability and increased water use of establishing rehabilitation.

What we will be doing

The PHCC will be preparing an evidence- and value-based submission on Alcoa's proposals.

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

What we want

- ☒ A more strategic approach which prioritises protection of the Northern Jarrah Forest and only permits mining in areas with lower values
- ☒ A moratorium on clearing in the Northern Jarrah Forest until the strategic assessment is done
- ☒ Permanent and secure protection for the high value areas of the Northern Jarrah Forest
- ☒ The transition of environmental impact assessments out of State Agreement Acts (for both Alcoa and South32) and into contemporary, transparent and participative processes
- ☒ Reduction in the extent of the mining tenement ML1SA granted to Alcoa under the State Agreement Act
- ☒ Independent, evidence-based assessment of rehabilitation and ecological restoration in the Northern Jarrah Forest
- ☒ Any approvals for further clearing to be conditional on successful rehabilitation completion, with a target to progressively reduce the area of land that is cleared and unrehabilitated