



For immediate release

WA Forest Alliance refers Alcoa mine plans to the EPA

Perth, Western Australia - 28th February 2023

The WA Forest Alliance has today referred Alcoa's Mining and Management Plans (MMP) to the EPA for a full environmental assessment.

For decades, Alcoa's bauxite mining has been approved via 5-year MMPs that have not been made public or subjected to full environmental assessments.

WA Forest Alliance believes that the elevated risk associated with the most recent MMPs, as well as the poor rehabilitation outcomes, cumulative impacts following 60 years of mining, and the very high level of public concern, warrant a rigorous, scientific and transparent assessment by the EPA.

Alcoa's MMPs include plans to clear high gradient slopes in close proximity to Perth's drinking water dam, posing an unacceptably high level of contamination risk.

The MMPs would have major impacts on the majority of the factors considered in EPA assessments including flora and vegetation, terrestrial fauna, inland waters, GHG emissions and human health.

The plans also threaten federally listed flora and fauna including the three species of South West Black Cockatoos, that are considered Matters of National Environmental Significance, and Wafa has requested that the action is deemed controlled and assessed under Federal environmental laws.

The Wafa referral highlights the fact that rehabilitation is failing to keep up with clearing rates and even where rehabilitation is occurring, the habitat quality is poor; the carbon storage capacity is a fraction of that of the original forest; and the high evapotranspiration rates put both the rehabilitation and the surrounding forest at increased risk of drought impacts.

Alcoa seeks to justify mining in the sensitive and high conservation value Jarrah Forests near Perth on the basis of its rehabilitation effort. However, none of Alcoa's mine-sites have been successfully rehabilitated against current (2016) standards, and only a fraction (1,500ha) of its mine-sites have met the previous, less rigorous completion criteria.

The EPA is currently considering Alcoa proposals to clear an additional 9,273 ha under two separate proposals.

Wafa believes it is appropriate that the clearing associated with the MMPs – which would occur in highly sensitive environments – is also assessed by the EPA, and in the broader context of the additional proposed and historic clearing.

Comments attributed to Jess Beckerling, Wafa convener

The gravity of the risks associated with Alcoa's mining plans warrant a full, transparent and cumulative impact assessment.

This is obviously a matter of major public concern – the protection of drinking water is something that the WA public are very invested in.

The expectation must be that current best-practice WA government policy and aspirations are applied and maintained and that the safety of drinking water and the integrity of ecological function is protected.

Benign activities like bushwalking are excluded from the catchment to prevent a contamination event because of the clear need to protect human health and social surroundings. It is insupportable for mining to be occurring in this highly sensitive environment without the highest level of environmental assessment.

We are calling on the EPA to carry out a thorough, transparent, cumulative impact assessment of Alcoa's MMPs so that the risks and impacts can be fully understood and mitigated against.

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ABOUT THE WA FOREST ALLIANCE: Wafa was established in 1990 to provide an umbrella organisation for the many community groups working to protect WA's South West forests. We represent 26 groups concerned with forest conservation in our advocacy and education programs.

For more information, visit: wafa.org.au or find us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter