

Mine rehabilitation not possible in Jarrah forest



South32 rehabilitation efforts. Photo taken July 2024.

Rehabilitation does not restore the Jarrah forest after bauxite mining. Independent studies now confirm this. It's time to end mining expansions and protect the remaining forest for life.

The Northern Jarrah Forests are some of Earth's most beautiful yet vulnerable forests. They are home to many unique plants and animals and tens of thousands of years of Noongar heritage. Since 1963 the forests have been mined for bauxite, with Alcoa and South32 already clearing over 32,000ha. In the next 15 years, massive proposed expansions will threaten critical water supplies and air quality, impact world-class trails and destroy over 10,000ha of forests – vital carbon stores and habitat for threatened wildlife.

FAILED REHABILITATION

Independent scientists have given Alcoa only 2-stars for its bauxite mine site rehabilitation in the Northern Jarrah Forest (NJF).

This is well below the 5-star rating the company and government agree is needed to restore a self-sustaining forest ecosystem.

None of Alcoa's rehabilitation has been signed off by the WA Government as successfully completed in 60 years of mining.

Compared to unmined forests, 20-year-old rehabilitation has:

- fewer plant species (less species richness)
- a different species profile (altered species composition)
- fewer functional traits for ecosystem processes (less functional diversity)
- more invasive species (more weeds)
- Jarrah trees forking closer to the ground (scrubbier appearance)
- fewer Marri trees (important for fauna habitat and ecological resilience).

South32's rehabilitation efforts are no better.

The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) states the success of South32's rehabilitation is 'yet to be determined ... as evidence of rehabilitation performance have not been provided'.

SOLD A LIE

For decades, West Australians have been sold the lie that rehabilitation is working.

Limited metrics have been used for past assessments, for example, species richness has been measured, but not species composition or functional diversity. Early results have been assumed to be sustained over time, yet from 18 months to 25 years, Alcoa's only measure of biodiversity more than halved.



IT CANNOT BE DONE

Mining removes the very bauxitic substrate on which the Jarrah forest ecosystem has evolved. Take this away and a Jarrah forest cannot be returned.

“The scientific community is clear: it is not a lack of knowledge but a lack of ecological fabric to create a Jarrah forest that is the issue.”

Professor Kingsley Dixon

SOURCES

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For links view the digital copy at bit.ly/Rehab-Fail

TAKE ACTION

Please tell the Premier and the Ministers for Environment, Water and Mines that their constituents want:

- The EPA to provide strategic advice to the Minister for Environment on the pressures on the NJF and longterm management of the bioregion.
- Alcoa's mine expansions currently in front of the EPA rejected as rehabilitation of the NJF will never be successful and cannot be accepted as a mitigation measure. The exemption that allows Alcoa to keep clearing whilst the EPA assesses their Mining Management Program should also be revoked.
- A network of new protected areas to be created covering the remaining NJF.

EMAIL THE GOVERNMENT DECISION-MAKERS

Let them know you want to see the NJF protected from bauxite mining and rehabilitation to not be accepted as a mitigation strategy by using our simple template. bit.ly/Rehab-Fail



End Forest Mining is an alliance of many groups, representing tens of thousands of people, and growing. We are calling on the Cook Government to end forest mining and safeguard WA's magnificent forests in secure protected areas. For further information visit endforestmining.org.au