



Hon Andrew Cripps MP  
Minister for Natural Resources and Mines

Ref CLLO/13120

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30 SEP 2013

Mr Neil Laurie  
The Clerk of the Parliament  
Parliament House  
Cnr George and Alice Streets  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter of 13 September 2013 forwarding for response petition 2085-13 as tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 12 September 2013.

The resources and energy sector is a major economic contributor for Queensland and is one of the four pillars that will help drive the economy. As part of a balanced approach, the government recognises the importance of highest standards of environmental practice and social responsibility, and is committed to protecting the environment.

Mining and exploration activities in Queensland are administered by the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines under the *Mineral Resources Act 1989* (the MRA).

On 4 June 2010, a declaration of the Wenlock River Basin as a wild river area was announced under the *Wild Rivers Act 2005*. As a result of this declaration, certain areas of land are not available for mining lease activities. In particular, a 500 metre high preservation area (HPA) was determined around the Coolibah Springs complex that is situated in the Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve.

The company making the application to mine concluded that, as a result of the declaration of the HPA, the project was no longer viable given forecast economic conditions, and that it could not proceed unless the HPA was reduced in size.

At the state election, the Queensland Government committed to protecting Cape York's iconic natural areas and areas of high conservation value, balanced with appropriate economic development.

The government has committed to replacing wild river declarations on Cape York Peninsula with a Cape York Regional Plan to be developed with the input of Cape York locals and other relevant stakeholders. This approach will not only address pristine waterway management, but will also allow for the integration of protected areas and natural resource management, and will support sustainable economic development opportunities for communities across the Cape York region.

Under the MRA, any eligible person may make an application over available land for the grant of a mining lease for specified minerals and/or purpose. The process for obtaining the grant of a mining lease involves a detailed assessment of the application, including public notification and an opportunity for persons affected by the application to object to the grant of the lease.

Objections to the grant of a mining lease are referred to the Land Court of Queensland for determination.

The grant of a mining lease is also dependent on the issuing of a relevant environmental authority (EA) by the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection under the *Environmental Protection Act 1994* (EPA). The process for the issue of an EA involves a detailed assessment of the impacts of a proposed mining operation on the environment and appropriate ways to manage these impacts, provides for public consultation, and includes opportunity for objection to the issue of the authority. Objections to the issue of an EA are also referred to the Land Court of Queensland for determination.

In relation to the mining lease application over part of the Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve, Cape Alumina Limited (Cape Alumina) submitted an application and revised Initial Advice Statement for its Pisolite Hills project to the Coordinator-General on 27 September 2012 for consideration as a "significant project" under the *State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971*. The Coordinator-General advised Cape Alumina on 2 October 2012 that the Pisolite Hills project is a "significant project" for which an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is required under that Act. The company will require an accepted EIS for the progression of the EA for the mining lease applications.

I should note that a "significant project" declaration does not imply the government's approval of, commitment to or support for, the Pisolite Hills project. Rather, it means the project will undergo a rigorous and comprehensive environmental impact assessment involving whole of government coordination, and does not exempt the project from any approvals, laws or planning instruments.

I should also note that a new referral under the requirements of the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cwlth) would also be necessary for the Pisolite Hills project as it was previously assessed as a "controlled action" under that piece of Commonwealth legislation.

The consideration of, or grant or otherwise of, the mining lease applications impacting on the Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve area will continue through due process with consideration of the requirements of all applicable legislation, including native title rights and interests and environmental impact assessments.

Any enquiries regarding this response can be referred to Mr Luke Croton, Regional Director, Northern Region, Mines, Department of Natural Resources and Mines, on telephone (07) 4760 7434.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Cripps', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

**Andrew Cripps MP**  
**Minister for Natural Resources and Mines**