

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Mr Guyula to the Minister for Mining and Industry:

**Environment Impact Assessment**

In 2012, Western Desert Resources underwent an Environmental Impact Assessment for an iron ore mine at Roper Bar, and it was approved later that year. In 2015 the company was liquidated and the mine was closed. Last year, the mine was reopened under the new ownership of Nathan River Resources and was given re-approval under the Mining Management Act, however no new environmental approval process was undertaken, despite the last EIA occurring over nine years ago.

The 2012 EIA pointed out a number of environmental issues with the project, including the impacts of the proposed diversion of the Towns River. These issues are still of concern. Recently the company has applied for an amendment to the Waste Discharge Licence, granted in May 2020, indicating that there has been a change in nature of mining activities, further increasing the necessity of a new environmental assessment.

**Question:**

1. Why wasn't the mine referred to the NTEPA to undergo an environmental impact assessment when it was re-approved in May 2020, and what community consultation occurred that led to this decision?

**Answer:**

The Mining Management Plan (MMP) for recommencement of mining at the Nathan River Project was not referred to the NT EPA as it did not trigger referral:

- there were no changes to the previously assessed works and subsequent environmental risk;
- assessments conducted under the *Environmental Assessment Act 1982* do not expire; and
- The previous assessment was not terminated under the *Environment Protection Act 2019*.

In April 2020, the MMP was approved and Nathan River Resources (NRR) was authorised to recommence mining, subject to the *Mining Management Act 2001* (MMA). Mining was to occur within the existing mine pits and no new disturbances were proposed. The described works were smaller in scale than those outlined in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), with smaller pits and no diversion of the Townes River.

The MMA requires that a MMP include the management systems for the site, which covers stakeholder consultation. The NRR MMP outlined various community consultations conducted by NRR, including:

- ongoing engagement with the Northern Land Council regarding the Indigenous Land Use Agreement and community consultation;
- formal engagement with underlying pastoralist, Glencore and informal discussions with Lorella Springs;
- engagement with Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Head Rangers at Limmen National Park; and
- consultation with other relevant stakeholders including McArthur River Mine, Roper Gulf Shire and the Amateur Fisherman's Association.