



# Clearing Permit Decision Report

## 1. Application details

### 1.1. Permit application details

Permit application No.: 3202/3  
Permit type: Purpose Permit

### 1.2. Proponent details

Proponent's name: Saracen Gold Mines Pty Ltd

### 1.3. Property details

Property: Mining Lease 31/172  
Local Government Area: Shire of Menzies  
Colloquial name: Wallbrook Project

### 1.4. Application

Clearing Area (ha)	No. Trees	Method of Clearing	For the purpose of:
90		Mechanical Removal	Mineral production and associated works

### 1.5. Decision on application

Decision on Permit Application: Grant  
Decision Date: 7 November 2019

## 2. Site Information

### 2.1. Existing environment and information

#### 2.1.1. Description of the native vegetation under application

**Vegetation Description** The vegetation of the application area is broadly mapped as the following Beard vegetation association:

**400:** Succulent steppe with open low woodland; mulga over bluebush (GIS Database).

Alexander Holm and Associates (2009) undertook a flora and vegetation survey that covered the Wallbrook Project area, which included the proposed Crusader, Eleven Bells and Redbrook mines and surrounding areas. Alexander Holm and Associates (2009) identified five land units within the application area that correspond with five different vegetation communities.

#### Vegetation Communities

Alexander Holm and Associates (2009) determined that the survey area contains the following vegetation communities:

#### **BLSS: Bladder saltbush low shrublands**

This vegetation community consists of land units 3a, 5 and 6.

#### **CPBS: Calcyphytic pearl bluebush shrublands**

This vegetation community consists of land units 2a, 2b, 3a and 3b. This land unit is determined by CALM (2002) to be an 'ecosystem at risk', primarily due to overgrazing and feral animals. Overall, this unit is reported as being a widespread community with a regular occurrence in a regional context.

#### **PSAS: Sago bush low shrublands**

This vegetation community consists of land units 3a and 6.

#### **PXHS: Plain mixed halophyte low shrublands**

This vegetation community consists of land unit 3a. This land unit is determined by CALM (2002) to be an 'ecosystem at risk', primarily due to overgrazing and feral animals. Overall, this unit is reported as being a widespread community with a regular occurrence in a regional context.

#### **SGRS: Sandy granitic *Acacia* shrublands**

This vegetation community consists of land units 1b and 3c.

#### Land Units

Alexander Holm and Associates (2009) determined that the survey area contains the following land units:

#### **2a) Low rises and gently sloping plains on volcanic rocks:**

Very scattered to scattered, low or mixed height shrublands dominated by *Maireana sedifolia* often with prominent low tree or tall shrub layers of *Casuarina pauper*, *Acacia quadrimarginea* or *A. aneura*. Other common shrubs are *Ptilotus obovatus*, *Hakea preissii*, *Maireana pyramidata*, *M. georgei*, *M. triptera*, *Atriplex vesicaria*,

*Solanum lasiophyllum*, *Dodonea lobulata*, *Eremophila* spp., *Scaevola spinescens* and the grass *Enneapogon caerulescens*.

This land unit correlates to the CPBS vegetation community. Overall, this land unit is reported as being a widespread community with a regular occurrence in a regional context.

**2b) Low gravelly rises, minor breakaways and gently sloping plains:**

Very scattered to scattered, low or mixed height shrublands dominated by *Maireana sedifolia* with numerous other shrubs including *Acacia quadrimarginea*, *A. tetragonophylla*, *Casuarina pauper*, *Ptilotus obovatus*, *Dodonea lobulata*, *Maireana triptera* and *Enchylaena tomentosa*.

This land unit correlates to the CPBS vegetation community. Overall, this land unit is reported as being a widespread community with a regular occurrence in a regional context.

**3a) Stony weakly saline plains:**

Isolated to scattered, low halophytic shrublands dominated by *Atriplex vesicaria* or *Maireana pyramidata* (occasionally *Maireana sedifolia*) with numerous other shrubs commonly *Maireana georgei*, *M. glomerifolia*, *Hakea preissii*, *Ptilotus obovatus*, *Tecticornia halocnemoides*, *Frankenia* sp., *Scaevola spinescens* and *Enchylaena tomentosa*.

This land unit correlates to the BLSS, CPBS, PSAS and PXHS vegetation communities. Overall, this land unit is reported as being a widespread community with a regular occurrence in a regional context.

**3c) Plains on granitic rocks:**

Very scattered, tall shrublands of *Acacia quadrimarginea* (occasionally with *A. aneura*) and diverse, low shrubs dominated by *Eremophila compacta*, *Ptilotus obovatus* and *Chrysocephalum puteale*, and also annual grasses.

This land unit correlates to the SGRS vegetation community. Overall, this land unit is reported as being a widespread community with a regular occurrence in a regional context.

**6) Drainage lines:**

Very scattered to scattered, low shrublands dominated by halophytic shrubs *Atriplex vesicaria* or *Maireana pyramidata* with *Maireana georgei*, *Eremophila decipiens*, *Hakea preissii*, *Casuarina pauper*, *Atriplex bunburyana* and *Dodonea lobulata*.

This land unit correlates to the BLSS and PSAS vegetation communities. Overall, this land unit is reported as being a widespread community with a regular occurrence in a regional context.

**Clearing Description**

Wallbrook Project.  
Saracen Gold Mines Pty Ltd proposes to clear up to 90 hectares of native vegetation within a boundary of approximately 329 hectares, for the purpose of mineral production and associated works. The project is located approximately 105 kilometres north-east of Kanowna, within the Shire of Menzies.

**Vegetation Condition**

Very Good: Vegetation structure altered; obvious signs of disturbance (Keighery, 1994);

to:

Degraded: Structure severely disturbed; regeneration to good condition requires intensive management (Keighery, 1994).

**Comment**

Clearing permit CPS 3202/1 was granted by the Department of Mines and Petroleum (now the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety) on 10 September 2009 and was valid from 10 October 2009 to 31 December 2014. The permit authorised the clearing of up to 90 hectares of native vegetation within a boundary of approximately 329 hectares, for the purpose of mineral production and associated works.

CPS 3202/2 was granted on 23 October 2014, amending the permit to extend the permit duration by five years to 31 December 2019. The area of clearing authorised and the permit boundaries remained unchanged.

On 1 October 2019, the Permit Holder applied to amend CPS 3202/2 to remove Mining Lease 31/231 from the permit therefore reducing the permit boundary from 329 hectares to 242 hectares, and to extend the permit duration by five years to 31 December 2024.

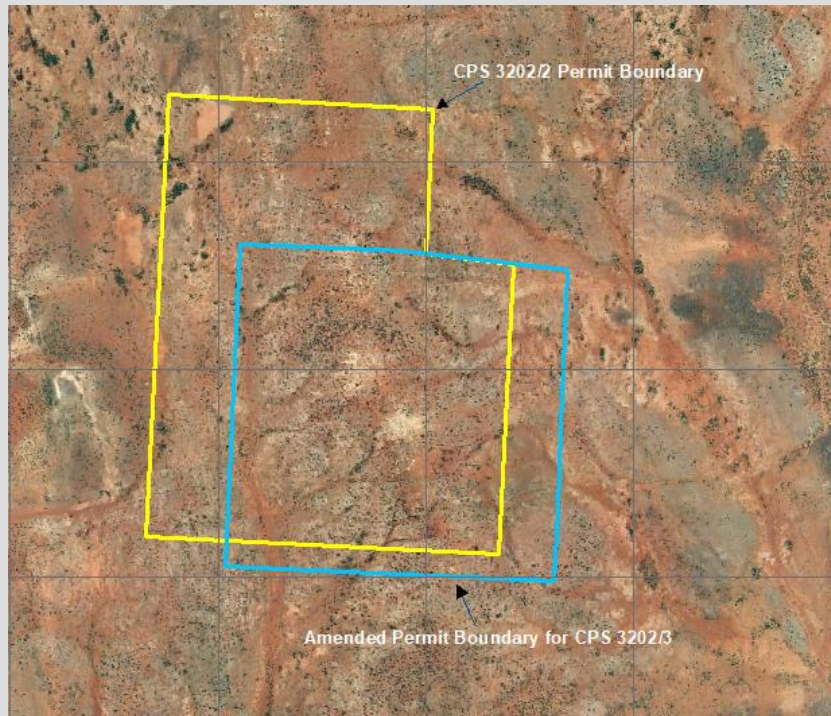


Figure 1: Original clearing permit boundary (yellow area) and proposed amended permit boundary (blue area).

### 3. Assessment of application against Clearing Principles

#### Comments

This amendment to extend the period in which clearing is authorised for an additional five years is unlikely to result in any significant changes to the environmental impacts of the proposed clearing. The area of clearing authorised remains unchanged, however the permit boundary has been reduced by 87 hectares from 329 hectares to 242 hectares as Mining Lease 31/231 has been removed from the tenure on the permit. No clearing of native vegetation by the proponent has occurred on M 31/231 since CPS 3202/1 was granted on 10 September 2009 (GIS database).

The amendment application has been assessed against the clearing principles, planning instruments and other matters in accordance with s.51O of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*. Environmental information has been reviewed, and the assessment of the proposed clearing against the clearing principles remains consistent with the assessment contained in previous decision reports CPS 3202/1 and CPS 3202/2.

#### Methodology

GIS Database:

- DPaW Tenure
- Hydrography, Lakes
- Hydrography, Linear
- IBRA Australia
- Imagery
- Landsystem Rangelands
- Pre-European Vegetation
- Public Drinking Water Source Areas
- Soils, Statewide
- Threatened and Priority Ecological Communities boundaries
- Threatened and Priority Ecological Communities buffers
- Threatened and Priority Flora
- Threatened Fauna

#### Planning Instrument, Native Title, previous EPA decision or other matter.

#### Comments

There are no native title claims over the area under application (DPLH, 2019). However, the mining tenure has been granted in accordance with the future act regime of the *Native Title Act 1993* and the nature of the act (i.e. the proposed clearing activity) has been provided for in that process, therefore, the granting of a clearing permit is not a future act under the *Native Title Act 1993*.

There are no registered Aboriginal Sites of Significance within the application area (DPLH, 2019). It is the proponent's responsibility to comply with the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972* and ensure that no Aboriginal Sites of Significance are damaged through the clearing process.

It is the proponent's responsibility to liaise with the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, to determine whether a Works Approval, Water Licence, Bed and Banks Permit, or any other licences or approvals are required for the proposed works.

The amendment application was advertised on 21 October 2019 by the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety inviting submissions from the public. No submissions were received in relation to this application.

**Methodology** DPLH (2019)

#### 4. References

- Alexander Holm and Associates (2009) Environmental Assessment: Proposed Wallbrook mine sites and surrounds. Report prepared for Saracen Gold Mines Pty Ltd by Alexander Holm and Associates, 2009.
- CALM (2002) Bioregional Summary of the 2002 Biodiversity Audit for Western Australia. Department of Conservation and Land Management, Western Australia.
- DPLH (2019) Aboriginal Heritage Inquiry System. Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage.  
<http://maps.daa.wa.gov.au/AHIS/> (Accessed 22 October 2019).
- Keighery, B.J. (1994) Bushland Plant Survey: A Guide to Plant Community Survey for the Community. Wildflower Society of WA (Inc). Nedlands, Western Australia.

#### 5. Glossary

##### Acronyms:

<b>BoM</b>	Bureau of Meteorology, Australian Government
<b>DAA</b>	Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Western Australia (now DPLH)
<b>DAFWA</b>	Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia (now DPIRD)
<b>DBCA</b>	Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, Western Australia
<b>DEC</b>	Department of Environment and Conservation, Western Australia (now DBCA and DWER)
<b>DoEE</b>	Department of the Environment and Energy, Australian Government
<b>DER</b>	Department of Environment Regulation, Western Australia (now DWER)
<b>DMIRS</b>	Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety, Western Australia
<b>DMP</b>	Department of Mines and Petroleum, Western Australia (now DMIRS)
<b>DPIRD</b>	Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Western Australia
<b>DPLH</b>	Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage, Western Australia
<b>DRF</b>	Declared Rare Flora
<b>DoE</b>	Department of the Environment, Australian Government (now DoEE)
<b>DoW</b>	Department of Water, Western Australia (now DWER)
<b>DPaW</b>	Department of Parks and Wildlife, Western Australia (now DBCA)
<b>DSEWPaC</b>	Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (now DoEE)
<b>DWER</b>	Department of Water and Environmental Regulation, Western Australia
<b>EPA</b>	Environmental Protection Authority, Western Australia
<b>EP Act</b>	<i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i> , Western Australia
<b>EPBC Act</b>	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> (Federal Act)
<b>GIS</b>	Geographical Information System
<b>ha</b>	Hectare (10,000 square metres)
<b>IBRA</b>	Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia
<b>IUCN</b>	International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources – commonly known as the World Conservation Union
<b>PEC</b>	Priority Ecological Community, Western Australia
<b>RIWI Act</b>	<i>Rights in Water and Irrigation Act 1914</i> , Western Australia
<b>TEC</b>	Threatened Ecological Community

##### Definitions:

{DBCA (2019) Conservation Codes for Western Australian Flora and Fauna. Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, Western Australia):-

**T** **Threatened species:**

Listed by order of the Minister as Threatened in the category of critically endangered, endangered or vulnerable under section 19(1), or is a rediscovered species to be regarded as threatened species under section 26(2) of the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (BC Act).

**Threatened fauna** is that subset of ‘Specially Protected Fauna’ listed under schedules 1 to 3 of the *Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice 2018* for Threatened Fauna.

**Threatened flora** is that subset of ‘Rare Flora’ listed under schedules 1 to 3 of the *Wildlife Conservation (Rare Flora) Notice 2018* for Threatened Flora.

The assessment of the conservation status of these species is based on their national extent and ranked according to their level of threat using IUCN Red List categories and criteria as detailed below.

**CR Critically endangered species**

Threatened species considered to be “*facing an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild in the immediate future, as determined in accordance with criteria set out in the ministerial guidelines*”.

Listed as critically endangered under section 19(1)(a) of the BC Act in accordance with the criteria set out in section 20 and the ministerial guidelines. Published under schedule 1 of the *Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice 2018* for critically endangered fauna or the *Wildlife Conservation (Rare Flora) Notice 2018* for critically endangered flora.

**EN Endangered species**

Threatened species considered to be “*facing a very high risk of extinction in the wild in the near future, as determined in accordance with criteria set out in the ministerial guidelines*”.

Listed as endangered under section 19(1)(b) of the BC Act in accordance with the criteria set out in section 21 and the ministerial guidelines. Published under schedule 2 of the *Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice 2018* for endangered fauna or the *Wildlife Conservation (Rare Flora) Notice 2018* for endangered flora.

**VU Vulnerable species**

Threatened species considered to be “*facing a high risk of extinction in the wild in the medium-term future, as determined in accordance with criteria set out in the ministerial guidelines*”.

Listed as vulnerable under section 19(1)(c) of the BC Act in accordance with the criteria set out in section 22 and the ministerial guidelines. Published under schedule 3 of the *Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice 2018* for vulnerable fauna or the *Wildlife Conservation (Rare Flora) Notice 2018* for vulnerable flora.

**Extinct Species:**

**EX Extinct species**

Species where “*there is no reasonable doubt that the last member of the species has died*”, and listing is otherwise in accordance with the ministerial guidelines (section 24 of the BC Act).

Published as presumed extinct under schedule 4 of the *Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice 2018* for extinct fauna or the *Wildlife Conservation (Rare Flora) Notice 2018* for extinct flora.

**EW Extinct in the wild species**

Species that “*is known only to survive in cultivation, in captivity or as a naturalised population well outside its past range; and it has not been recorded in its known habitat or expected habitat, at appropriate seasons, anywhere in its past range, despite surveys over a time frame appropriate to its life cycle and form*”, and listing is otherwise in accordance with the ministerial guidelines (section 25 of the BC Act).

Currently there are no threatened fauna or threatened flora species listed as extinct in the wild. If listing of a species as extinct in the wild occurs, then a schedule will be added to the applicable notice.

**Specially protected species:**

Listed by order of the Minister as specially protected under section 13(1) of the BC Act. Meeting one or more of the following categories: species of special conservation interest; migratory species; cetaceans; species subject to international agreement; or species otherwise in need of special protection.

Species that are listed as threatened species (critically endangered, endangered or vulnerable) or extinct species under the BC Act cannot also be listed as Specially Protected species.

**MI Migratory species**

Fauna that periodically or occasionally visit Australia or an external Territory or the exclusive economic zone; or the species is subject of an international agreement that relates to the protection of migratory species and that binds the Commonwealth; and listing is otherwise in accordance with the ministerial guidelines (section 15 of the BC Act).

Includes birds that are subject to an agreement between the government of Australia and the governments of Japan (JAMBA), China (CAMBA) and The Republic of Korea (ROKAMBA), and fauna subject to the *Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals* (Bonn

Convention), an environmental treaty under the United Nations Environment Program. Migratory species listed under the BC Act are a subset of the migratory animals, that are known to visit Western Australia, protected under the international agreements or treaties, excluding species that are listed as Threatened species.

Published as migratory birds protected under an international agreement under schedule 5 of the *Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice 2018*.

**CD Species of special conservation interest (conservation dependent fauna)**

Fauna of special conservation need being species dependent on ongoing conservation intervention to prevent it becoming eligible for listing as threatened, and listing is otherwise in accordance with the ministerial guidelines (section 14 of the BC Act).

Published as conservation dependent fauna under schedule 6 of the *Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice 2018*.

**OS Other specially protected species**

Fauna otherwise in need of special protection to ensure their conservation, and listing is otherwise in accordance with the ministerial guidelines (section 18 of the BC Act).

Published as other specially protected fauna under schedule 7 of the *Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice 2018*.

**P Priority species:**

Possibly threatened species that do not meet survey criteria, or are otherwise data deficient, are added to the Priority Fauna or Priority Flora Lists under Priorities 1, 2 or 3. These three categories are ranked in order of priority for survey and evaluation of conservation status so that consideration can be given to their declaration as threatened fauna or flora.

Species that are adequately known, are rare but not threatened, or meet criteria for near threatened, or that have been recently removed from the threatened species or other specially protected fauna lists for other than taxonomic reasons, are placed in Priority 4. These species require regular monitoring.

Assessment of Priority codes is based on the Western Australian distribution of the species, unless the distribution in WA is part of a contiguous population extending into adjacent States, as defined by the known spread of locations.

**P1 Priority One - Poorly-known species**

Species that are known from one or a few locations (generally five or less) which are potentially at risk. All occurrences are either: very small; or on lands not managed for conservation, e.g. agricultural or pastoral lands, urban areas, road and rail reserves, gravel reserves and active mineral leases; or otherwise under threat of habitat destruction or degradation. Species may be included if they are comparatively well known from one or more locations but do not meet adequacy of survey requirements and appear to be under immediate threat from known threatening processes. Such species are in urgent need of further survey.

**P2 Priority Two - Poorly-known species**

Species that are known from one or a few locations (generally five or less), some of which are on lands managed primarily for nature conservation, e.g. national parks, conservation parks, nature reserves and other lands with secure tenure being managed for conservation. Species may be included if they are comparatively well known from one or more locations but do not meet adequacy of survey requirements and appear to be under threat from known threatening processes. Such species are in urgent need of further survey.

**P3 Priority Three - Poorly-known species**

Species that are known from several locations, and the species does not appear to be under imminent threat, or from few but widespread locations with either large population size or significant remaining areas of apparently suitable habitat, much of it not under imminent threat. Species may be included if they are comparatively well known from several locations but do not meet adequacy of survey requirements and known threatening processes exist that could affect them. Such species are in need of further survey.

**P4 Priority Four - Rare, Near Threatened and other species in need of monitoring**

(a) Rare. Species that are considered to have been adequately surveyed, or for which sufficient knowledge is available, and that are considered not currently threatened or in need of special protection but could be if present circumstances change. These species are usually represented on conservation lands.

(b) Near Threatened. Species that are considered to have been adequately surveyed and that are close to qualifying for vulnerable but are not listed as Conservation Dependent.

(c) Species that have been removed from the list of threatened species during the past five years for reasons other than taxonomy.

**Principles for clearing native vegetation:**

- (a) Native vegetation should not be cleared if it comprises a high level of biological diversity.
- (b) Native vegetation should not be cleared if it comprises the whole or a part of, or is necessary for the maintenance of, a significant habitat for fauna indigenous to Western Australia.
- (c) Native vegetation should not be cleared if it includes, or is necessary for the continued existence of, rare flora.
- (d) Native vegetation should not be cleared if it comprises the whole or a part of, or is necessary for the maintenance of a threatened ecological community.
- (e) Native vegetation should not be cleared if it is significant as a remnant of native vegetation in an area that has been extensively cleared.
- (f) Native vegetation should not be cleared if it is growing in, or in association with, an environment associated with a watercourse or wetland.
- (g) Native vegetation should not be cleared if the clearing of the vegetation is likely to cause appreciable land degradation.
- (h) Native vegetation should not be cleared if the clearing of the vegetation is likely to have an impact on the environmental values of any adjacent or nearby conservation area.
- (i) Native vegetation should not be cleared if the clearing of the vegetation is likely to cause deterioration in the quality of surface or underground water.
- (j) Native vegetation should not be cleared if clearing the vegetation is likely to cause, or exacerbate, the incidence or intensity of flooding.