



# Clearing Permit Decision Report

## 1. Application details

### 1.1. Permit application details

Permit application No.: 6981/3  
Permit type: Purpose Permit

### 1.2. Proponent details

Proponent's name: Lake Austin Mining Pty Ltd

### 1.3. Property details

Property: Mining Lease 20/54  
Local Government Area: Shire of Cue  
Colloquial name: White Well Gold Project

### 1.4. Application

Clearing Area (ha)	No. Trees	Method of Clearing	For the purpose of:
123.51		Mechanical Removal	Mineral Production and Associated Activities

### 1.5. Decision on application

Decision on Permit Application: Grant  
Decision Date: 3 September 2020

## 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:  
**18:** Low woodland; mulga (*Acacia aneura*) (GIS Database).

A flora and vegetation survey was conducted over part of the application area by Botanica Consulting (Botanica) during March 2012 and a targeted survey conducted during September 2019. The following vegetation types were recorded within the application area (Botanica, 2012; Botanica, 2019):

**1:** Low woodland of *Acacia aneura* over low scrub of *Eremophila forrestii* subsp. *forrestii* over open low grass of *Monachather paradoxus/Aristida contorta*;

**2:** Low woodland of *Acacia caesaneura* over low scrub of *Eremophila jucunda* subsp. *jucunda* over open low grass of *Eriachne flaccida/Aristida contorta*;

**3:** Open low woodland of *Acacia aneura* over open low scrub of *Thryptomene decussata* over open low grass of *Aristida contorta*;

**4:** Low woodland of *Acacia aneura* over open dwarf scrub of *Ptilotus obovatus/Maireana triptera* on rehabilitated waste landform;

**5:** Low woodland of *Acacia aneura* over scrub of *Acacia ramulosa* over low open grass *Monachather paradoxus*; and

**6:** Forest of *Acacia aneura* over low scrub of *Acacia ramulosa/Eremophila forrestii* subsp. *forrestii* over open low grass of *Monachather paradoxus/Eragrostis eriopoda* in creekline.

An additional vegetation type was identified during the targeted flora survey in September 2019:

**RH-AFW1:** Forest of *Acacia incurvaneura* over low shrub of *Eremophila* species and open low grassland of *Aristida contorta* on rocky hillslope.

#### Clearing Description

White Well Gold Project.  
Lake Austin Mining Pty Ltd proposes to clear up to 123.51 hectares of native vegetation within a boundary of approximately 523 hectares, for the purpose of mineral production and associated activities. The project is located approximately 30 kilometres east of Cue, within the Shire of Cue.

<b>Vegetation Condition</b>	<p>Good: Structure significantly altered by multiple disturbance; retains basic structure/ability to regenerate (Keighery, 1994).</p> <p>to</p> <p>Degraded: Structure severely disturbed; regeneration to good condition requires intensive management (Keighery, 1994).</p>
<b>Comment</b>	<p>The vegetation condition was derived from a vegetation survey conducted by Botanica (2012). The Permit Holder will utilise land previously disturbed by exploration drilling activities where possible.</p> <p>The application area is located across the existing White Well mine site. The proposed clearing is for the expansion of the mine site. Clearing Permit 5075/2 was granted to the previous mine site operator (Cobra Mining Ltd) on 27 June 2013. CPS 5075/2 authorised the clearing of up to 99 hectares of native vegetation within a boundary of approximately 378 hectares, which included all the current application area.</p> <p>Clearing permit CPS 6981/1 was granted by the Department of Mines and Petroleum (now the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety) on 12 May 2016 and was valid from 4 June 2016 to 30 June 2021. The permit authorised the clearing of up to 110 hectares of native vegetation within a boundary of approximately 213 hectares, for the purpose of mineral production and associated activities.</p> <p>CPS 6981/2 was granted on 19 October 2019, amending the permit to increase the area authorised to clear from 110 hectares to 114.7 hectares and to increase the permit boundary from 214 hectares to 280 hectares.</p> <p>On 18 July 2020, the Permit Holder applied to amend CPS 6981/2 to increase the area authorised to clear by 8.81 hectares and increase the permit boundary by 243 hectares.</p>

### 3. Assessment of application against Clearing Principles

#### Comments

Lake Austin Mining Pty Ltd has applied to increase the area authorised to clear by 8.81 hectares and to increase the permit boundary by approximately 243 hectares. The amendment is to allow for the construction of a new internal access road, northern and southern bore field pipeline corridor, and water bore sites.

The vegetation of the amendment area is broadly mapped as Beard vegetation association 18: Low woodland; mulga (*Acacia aneura*) (GIS Database). A targeted flora survey conducted across part of the amendment area identified the vegetation as being dominated by *Acacia* woodland over *Eremophila* shrubland (Botanica, 2019). No Threatened or Priority Ecological Communities were identified as occurring within the amendment area (GIS Database; Botanica, 2012; Botanica, 2019).

A desktop assessment identified 23 conservation significant flora species having previously been recorded within 50 kilometres of the amendment area; including one Threatened, five Priority 1, two Priority 2, 11 Priority 3, and four Priority 4 species (Botanica, 2019). The targeted flora survey conducted over parts of the amendment area found no Threatened flora within the amendment area (Botanica, 2019). During the field assessment, eight individuals of Priority 3 species *Drummondita miniata* were recorded at three locations (Botanica, 2019). These individuals were identified in vegetation types 1 and RH-AFW1 (Botanica, 2019). *Drummondita miniata* is not endemic to the area and is found at other locations within the Murchison bioregion (Western Australian Herbarium, 1998-). The proposed increase of 8.81 hectares of clearing is unlikely to significantly impact the conservation status of this species.

A desktop assessment of the initial application area identified eight conservation significant fauna species that have the potential to occur due to suitable habitat (Harewood, 2012). The majority of these species are migratory species and are not expected to be dependent on the habitats occurring within amendment area (Harewood, 2012). A targeted malleefowl (*Leipoa ocellata*, VU at a state and federal level) mound survey was conducted in September 2019 and found no malleefowl mounds or evidence of malleefowl activity within the amendment areas surveyed (Botanica, 2019).

The fauna habitats within the amendment area are similar to those identified during a fauna assessment conducted by Harewood (2012) in March 2012 of the initial application area. The habitats identified in the initial application area are common and widespread throughout the region (Harewood, 2012). Conservation significant fauna species that may potentially utilise the area are unlikely to be significantly impacted by the proposed clearing as the fauna habitats extend well beyond the amendment area. However, potential impacts to threatened fauna species may be reduced by the continued implementation of a fauna management condition.

There are multiple minor ephemeral drainage lines that run through the amendment area (GIS Database). There is one vegetation type associated with these drainage lines:

**6:** Forest of *Acacia aneura* over low scrub of *Acacia ramulosa*/*Eremophila forrestii* subsp. *forrestii* over open low grass of *Monachather paradoxus*/*Eragrostis eriopoda* in creekline.

Potential impacts to vegetation growing in association with watercourses may be minimised by the implementation of a watercourse management condition.

The amendment area is located within the Wiluna and Jundee land systems (GIS Database). The Wiluna land system is susceptible to localised erosion when native vegetation is cleared and the Jundee land system is mildly susceptible to accelerated erosion when native vegetation is cleared (Curry et al., 1994). Potential land degradation as a result of the proposed clearing may be minimised by the existing staged clearing condition.

The proposed amendment is not likely to impact either the surface or groundwater quality in the local region, or exacerbate the incidence or intensity of flooding in the area.

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 decision reports CPS 6981/1 and 6981/2.

**Methodology** Botanica (2012)  
Botanica (2019)  
Curry et al. (1994)  
Harewood (2012)  
Western Australian Herbarium (1998-)

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 is one native title claim (WC1999/046) over the area under application (DPLH, 2020). This claim has been registered with the National Native Title Tribunal on behalf of the claimant group. 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, 2020). 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 10 August 2020 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 (2020)

#### 4. References

- Botanica (2012) Level 1 Flora and Vegetation Survey of White Well Mine. Report Prepared for Cobra Mining Ltd, by Botanica Consulting.
- Botanica (2019) Targeted flora/fauna survey – White Well Project M20/54 and P20/2190. Report Prepared for Lake Austin Mining Pty Ltd, by Botanica Consulting, October 2019.
- Curry, P.J., Payne, A.L., Leighton, K.A., Hennig, P. and Blood, D.A. (1994) An Inventory and Condition Survey of the Murchison River Catchment and Surrounds, Western Australia. Technical Bulletin No. 84. Department of Agriculture, Western Australia.
- DPLH (2020) Aboriginal Heritage Inquiry System. Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage.  
<http://maps.daa.wa.gov.au/AHIS/> (Accessed 17 August 2020).

- Harewood, G. (2012) Terrestrial Fauna Survey (Level 1) of the White Well Project. Report Prepared for Cobra Resources Limited, by G. Harewood, April 2012.
- Keighery, B.J. (1994) Bushland Plant Survey: A Guide to Plant Community Survey for the Community. Wildflower Society of WA (Inc). Nedlands, Western Australia.
- Western Australian Herbarium (1998-) FloraBase - the Western Australian Flora. Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. <https://florabase.dpaw.wa.gov.au/> (Accessed 24 August 2020).

## 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).

**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.