



# Clearing Permit Decision Report

## 1. Application details

### 1.1. Permit application details

Permit application No.: 7157/1  
Permit type: Purpose Permit

### 1.2. Proponent details

Proponent's name: Hanking Gold Mining Pty Ltd

### 1.3. Property details

Property: Mining Lease 77/159  
Mining Lease 77/424  
Mining Lease 77/721  
Local Government Area: Shire of Yilgarn  
Colloquial name: Axehandle Project

### 1.4. Application

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

### 1.5. Decision on application

Decision on Permit Application: Grant  
Decision Date: 25 August 2016

## 2. Site Information

### 2.1. Existing environment and information

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

**Vegetation Description** Beard vegetation associations have been mapped for the whole of Western Australia. One Beard vegetation association is located within the application area (GIS Database):

Beard association 1068 - Medium woodland; salmon gum, morrel, gimlet & *Eucalyptus sheathiana*.

A Level 2 flora and vegetation assessment was conducted over the application area in 2007 by Read (2014). A total of three vegetation types were identified as occurring within the application area;

1. PESW-L - Plain *Eucalyptus longicornis* Saltbush woodland;
2. ELWF - *Eucalyptus longicornis* woodland on broad flats; and
3. ESWF - *Eucalyptus salubris* and *E. salmonophloia* woodland on broad flats.

**Clearing Description** Axehandle Project.  
Hanking Gold Mining Pty Ltd (HGM) proposes to clear up to 13.14 hectares of native vegetation within a total boundary of approximately 13.14 hectares, for the purpose of mineral production and associated activities. The project is located approximately 11 kilometres south-east of Southern Cross, in the Shire of Yilgarn.

**Vegetation Condition** Good: Structure significantly altered by multiple disturbance; retains basic structure/ability to regenerate (Keighery, 1994);  
To:  
Degraded: Structure severely disturbed; regeneration to good condition requires intensive management (Keighery, 1994).

**Comment** The vegetation condition was derived from a report prepared by Read (2014). Weather conditions preceding the survey were less than ideal, resulting in limited amounts of ephemerals and grasses and a lack of flowering material on perennials.

## 3. Assessment of application against Clearing Principles

### Comments

The proposed clearing of 13.14 hectares of native vegetation within an application area of 13.14 hectares is to facilitate a small extension to the southern run-of-mine (ROM), a minor pit widening to the west, for the stockpiling of valuable topsoil for use in future rehabilitation activities, access to the dangerous goods yard and for the new low grade ROM stockpile and laydown areas. The proposed clearing of native vegetation is unlikely to have any significant environmental impacts.

Based on the vegetation and flora survey by Read (2014), the vegetation within the application area is in a 'degraded' to 'very good' condition, with degradation due to the surrounding mining operations and weeds within

the local area (Keighery, 1994; Read, 2014). Weeds have the potential to significantly change the dynamics of a natural ecosystem and lower the biodiversity of an area. Potential impacts to the biodiversity as a result of the proposed clearing may be minimised by the implementation of a weed management condition. The vegetation types identified within the application area are well represented within the region and the vegetation within the application area does not form a part of a significant remnant (Read, 2014). No Threatened or Priority flora species, Threatened or Priority Ecological Communities have been recorded within the application area (DPaW, 2016; Read, 2014).

A level 2 fauna survey was carried out over the application area and surrounding area by Western Wildlife (2008) during spring from 6 to 14 November 2007 and during autumn from 28 April to 6 May 2008. The vegetation types and associated habitats of the application area extend throughout the strip of vegetation that runs between Southern Cross and Marvel Loch (Cornishman Belt) and commonly occur across a widespread area (Read, 2014). No conservation significant fauna were recorded within the application area, and no significant faunal habitats were identified within the application area (Western Wildlife, 2008; GIS Database). Based on the small scale clearing (13.14 hectares) and the heavily disturbed areas adjacent and surrounding the proposed clearing, it is unlikely that the proposed clearing will impact any potential conservation significant fauna species or their habitat within the local area.

The application area is not located within any conservation area (GIS Database). There are no conservation areas within 20 kilometres of the application area (GIS Database).

There are no permanent watercourses or water bodies mapped within the area under application (GIS Database).

According to available databases, the soils of the application area are mapped as undulating plains with some low dunes, seasonal lakes, and clay pans: chief soils seem to be brown and greybrown calcareous earths (GIS Database). Flora and fauna surveys have noted that red-brown clay and clay/loam soils persist within the application area (Read 2014; Western Wildlife 2008). However, given the size of the proposed clearing and the likelihood of varied soil types, the application area may still be prone to erosion, therefore it is important to minimise the amount of time the land is left open. Potential degradation as a result of the proposed clearing may be minimised by the implementation of a staged clearing condition.

The application has been assessed against the clearing principles, planning instruments and other matters in accordance with s.51O of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*, and the proposed clearing may be at variance to Principle (g), is not likely to be at variance to Principles (a), (b), (c), (d), (h), (i), and (j), and is not at variance to Principles (e) and (f).

**Methodology** DPaW (2016)  
Keighery (1994)  
Read (2014)  
Western Wildlife (2008)

GIS Database:  
- DPaW Tenure  
- Hydrography, linear  
- Soils, statewide  
- Threatened Ecological Sites Buffered

### **Planning instrument, Native Title, RIWI Act Licence, EP Act Licence, Works Approval, Previous EPA decision or other matter.**

#### **Comments**

There are no native title claims over the application area (DAA, 2016). 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 Sites of Aboriginal Significance located in the area applied to clear (DAA, 2016). It is the proponent's responsibility to comply with the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972* and ensure that no Sites of Aboriginal Significance are damaged through the clearing process.

It is the proponent's responsibility to liaise with the Department of Environment Regulation, the Department of Parks and Wildlife and the Department of Water, 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 clearing permit application was advertised on 1 August 2016 by the Department of Mines and Petroleum inviting submissions from the public. There were no submissions received.

**Methodology** DAA (2016)

## 4. References

- DPaW (2016) NatureMap. Department of Parks and Wildlife, <http://naturemap.dec.wa.gov.au> (Accessed 26 July 2016).
- Keighery, B.J. (1994) Bushland Plant Survey: A Guide to Plant Community Survey for the Community. Wildflower Society of WA (Inc). Nedlands, Western Australia.
- Read, T.J. (2014) Flora & Vegetation Survey: Cornishman to Axehandle. Report prepared for Hanking Gold Mining Pty Ltd, by Recon Environmental, July 2014.
- Western Wildlife (2008) St Barbara Limited, Southern Cross Operations: Baseline Fauna Survey; Spring 2007 & Autumn 2008. Report prepared for Hanking Gold Mining Pty Ltd, by Western Wildlife, April 2008.

## 5. Glossary

### Acronyms:

<b>BoM</b>	Bureau of Meteorology, Australian Government
<b>DAA</b>	Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Western Australia
<b>DAFWA</b>	Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia
<b>DEC</b>	Department of Environment and Conservation, Western Australia (now DPaW and DER)
<b>DER</b>	Department of Environment Regulation, Western Australia
<b>DMP</b>	Department of Mines and Petroleum, Western Australia
<b>DRF</b>	Declared Rare Flora
<b>DotE</b>	Department of the Environment, Australian Government
<b>DoW</b>	Department of Water, Western Australia
<b>DPaW</b>	Department of Parks and Wildlife, Western Australia
<b>DSEWPaC</b>	Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (now DotE)
<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:

{DPaW (2015) Conservation Codes for Western Australian Flora and Fauna. Department of Parks and Wildlife, Western Australia}:-

<b>T</b>	<b>Threatened species:</b> Published as Specially Protected under the <i>Wildlife Conservation Act 1950</i> , listed under Schedules 1 to 4 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice for Threatened Fauna and Wildlife Conservation (Rare Flora) Notice for Threatened Flora (which may also be referred to as Declared Rare Flora).  <b>Threatened fauna</b> is that subset of 'Specially Protected Fauna' declared to be 'likely to become extinct' pursuant to section 14(4) of the Wildlife Conservation Act.  <b>Threatened flora</b> is flora that has been declared to be 'likely to become extinct or is rare, or otherwise in need of special protection', pursuant to section 23F(2) of the Wildlife Conservation Act.  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.
<b>CR</b>	<b>Critically endangered species</b> Threatened species considered to be facing an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild. Published as Specially Protected under the <i>Wildlife Conservation Act 1950</i> , in Schedule 1 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice for Threatened Fauna and Wildlife Conservation (Rare Flora) Notice for Threatened Flora.
<b>EN</b>	<b>Endangered species</b> Threatened species considered to be facing a very high risk of extinction in the wild. Published as Specially Protected under the <i>Wildlife Conservation Act 1950</i> , in Schedule 2 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice for Threatened Fauna and Wildlife Conservation (Rare Flora) Notice for Threatened Flora.
<b>VU</b>	<b>Vulnerable species</b> Threatened species considered to be facing a high risk of extinction in the wild. Published as Specially Protected under the <i>Wildlife Conservation Act 1950</i> , in Schedule 3 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice for Threatened Fauna and Wildlife Conservation (Rare Flora)

Notice for Threatened Flora.

- EX Presumed extinct species**  
Species which have been adequately searched for and there is no reasonable doubt that the last individual has died. Published as Specially Protected under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, in Schedule 4 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice for Presumed Extinct Fauna and Wildlife Conservation (Rare Flora) Notice for Presumed Extinct Flora.
- IA Migratory birds protected under an international agreement**  
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 the Bonn Convention, relating to the protection of migratory birds. Published as Specially Protected under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice.
- CD Conservation dependent fauna**  
Fauna of special conservation need being species dependent on ongoing conservation intervention to prevent it becoming eligible for listing as threatened. Published as Specially Protected under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, in Schedule 6 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice.
- OS Other specially protected fauna**  
Fauna otherwise in need of special protection to ensure their conservation. Published as Specially Protected under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, in Schedule 7 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice.
- P Priority species**  
Species which are poorly known; or  
Species that are adequately known, are rare but not threatened, and 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.