



GLOBAL INDIGENOUS ELDERS ALLIANCE

Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications Ministerial Office

PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Email: ec.sen@aph.gov.au

1 May 2024

Dear Secretary Senate Standing Committee on Enquiry investigating the Application from Glencore,

It is with sincere intent and in good faith that I forward this email on behalf of the Global Indigenous Elders Alliance (GIEA) which has a strong cultural affiliation with the Greater Brisbane Elders Alliance [GBEA] which as you may be aware is based in Brisbane but with an extensive reach with Aboriginal Elders across Queensland and nationally. GIEA is a group of diverse Linguistic, Cultural, spiritual and political Elders who prioritise language, education, cultural/spiritual and environment as key factors within the survival and flourishing of our societies, which is significant to the protection and preservation of our cultural heritage and developing leadership within our youth. The destruction of any one of these key factors can cause immense trauma for Indigenous peoples' which again as you know, disproportionately impacts upon the wellbeing of our cultural and the wellbeing of our families and kin.

The purpose of this letter is to raise with you a matter that we consider to be of urgent concern to First Nations people across Australia and for all Australians interested in and committed to the protection and preservation of cultural heritage, environmental sustainability and the health and wellbeing of a nation reliant upon the natural waters ways and resources that we are blessed to have across Australia.

This letter is founded upon the increasing concerns being raised by Aboriginal Elders and other advocacy groups who have spoken openly about the concerns they have for the work being undertaken by Glencore and its impact on the Artisan Basin water supply which we know has been a major source of environmental and human sustainability across time. From a cultural perspective we embrace our natural waterways as a life source that has as much significance to our people as our sacred sites and traditional homelands.

From a social point of view, we are very aware of how critical the Artesian Basin water supply is to the health and wellbeing of our national agricultural and farming industries



GLOBAL INDIGENOUS ELDERS ALLIANCE

and the supply of primary goods for human consumption, not only in the immediate region but across the state and nationally.

We acknowledge that we may be deemed as not being scientifically equipped to refute the claims of Glencore that no negative impact will be imposed upon the quality of the water supply from the Artesian Basin. However, it is very concerning for us as Elders and in support of a significant cohort of community and industry advocates, to note the major concerns that have been raised by Agriculturalist, the Framers Union and Traditional Owners around the serious risk being imposed upon the quality and longevity of the water supply from the Artesian Basin. This is particularly important given the questionable integrity of the research purportedly to have been undertaken by Glencore to substantiate their quest for Government approval for the treatment they wish to impose on the waters of the Artesian Basin. The Great Artesian Basin (GAB) – located in Australia, is the largest and deepest artesian basin in the world and for that reason alone, great care and further investigation should be undertaken as a matter of due diligence by Government to guarantee its sustainability, purity and viability for future generations.

We respect that the proposed date for the project is pending and as such, we implore you as the respective representative of the government to put the approval for Glencore on hold until a more independent, substantiated and environmentally inclusive evidenced based research project is obtained as to the impact on the quality, quantity and longevity of the Artesian Basin waterways. We ask that as Premier of Qld you work with Minister Tanya Plibersek, responsible for the Environment and Water, to commission an independent comprehensive research project on the impact of the project being proposed by Glencore to enable the final decision to be based upon a more intensive examination and analysis of all the issues involved, before any final and formal approval is considered for the Glencore project to proceed. This research should also include comprehensive consultation with the relevant Aboriginal Elders, their communities and Land Councils to ensure their questions, grievances and cultural caretaker aspirations and responsibilities are included in the decision-making process and the subsequent outcome.

We as Global Elders support Aboriginal Elders as custodians and Keepers of their Culture and Protectors of the respective waterways and the environment and as such we believe that it is important that an independent analysis of the Glencore proposal take place as the Elders have requested, as this will hopefully provide substantiated evidence of any concerns or negative influences that it may have on the Artesian Basin Water supply and the surrounding agricultural and community resources that rely upon the waters for sustenance, nourishment and survival.

With no intent to be disrespectful, we are sure Premier that you will agree that Governments cannot simply rely upon the notion of probability without engaging in its



GLOBAL INDIGENOUS ELDERS ALLIANCE

own independent research on any project that is submitted for Government approval. Especially when there are perceived fundamental implications for the national environment and waterways that we have in Australia such as the Artesian Basin. It

would be wrong and outside of any research ethical standards for Government to simply rely upon the claims made by any agency seeking Government approval, if its own independent analysis and its subsequent findings are not fulfilled and made publicly available, before the final approval of any project can be administered. These principles are even more critical when there is an expressed concern about the potential for a critical and alarming impact on the quality and quantity of our natural environment and waterways such as that evidenced by the Artesian Basin.

We in collaboration with the Aboriginal Elders who brought this matter to our attention, would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter in more detail with you if possible.

We await your response to the important concerns we have raised for your attention and the overall protection of an iconic environmental area such as our great Australian Artesian Basin.

Respectfully

Aunty Vicki-Ann Speechley-Golden
2024-25 GIEA Co-Chair