

657/1258.



The Hon Greg Hunt MP
Minister for the Environment



MC13-000441

Your reference: 657/1063

Chair
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Petitions
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

17 OCT 2013

Dear Chair

I refer to your letter of 24 June 2013 to the former Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, the Hon Tony Burke MP, inviting a response to the petition submitted to the Standing Committee on Petitions concerning the development of a mine and ore processing plant at Major's Creek, New South Wales. As I am now the Minister for the Environment, your letter has been passed to me for reply.

This activity (the Dargues Reef Gold Mine Project) was referred to the Minister for the Environment under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) on 6 December 2010 (EPBC 2010/5770), for consideration of whether or not it was likely to have a significant impact on matters protected under national environmental law. On 24 January 2011, the Minister's delegate decided that the action was a controlled action under Part 3 of the EPBC Act and would need to be assessed before it could proceed.

The assessment process included a rigorous assessment of the likely impacts of the proposal on matters protected under the EPBC Act. The assessment paid particular attention to potential impacts to surface water and groundwater downstream of the proposed action and associated impacts on matters of national environmental significance. A key concern of the Department of the Environment (the department) was the potential for impacts on the vulnerable Araluen Gum (*Eucalyptus kartzoffiana*), which occurs in several locations downstream of the proposed action.

The assessment concluded that the proposed action would not be likely to have unacceptable impacts on matters of national environmental significance and the action was approved by the delegate on 27 September 2011, subject to 26 conditions. The conditions of approval include the development and implementation of a surface water and groundwater monitoring program and the rehabilitation and revegetation of impacted areas on the site.

With respect to the petitioners' concerns about the impacts of the action on endangered species, I am satisfied that the impacts have been fully assessed and are acceptable subject to the conditions imposed, insofar as they affect matters protected under the EPBC Act.

Further information on this approval is available on the department's website at:

[http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-](http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referral_detail&proposal_id=5770)

[bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referral_detail&proposal_id=5770.](http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referral_detail&proposal_id=5770)

Thank you for bringing this petition to my attention.

Yours sincerely

Greg Hunt