

MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

**COYOTE GOLD MINE, STAGE 2 APPROXIMATELY 280 KILOMETRES SOUTH-EAST OF HALL'S CREEK TANAMI DESERT, SHIRE OF HALL'S CREEK – PROPOSAL UNDER S46 OF THE EP ACT TO AMEND CONDITION 5-4 OF MINISTERIAL STATEMENT 749**

I refer to your letter of 11 October 2010 requesting the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) inquire into and report to you under section 46(1) of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* on Tanami Gold NL's proposed changes to the environmental conditions for the Coyote Gold Mine, Stage 2 (Ministerial Statement 749).

The following is the EPA's Report and Recommendations (No. 1397) to you pursuant to section 46(3) of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*.

**Introduction**

The proponent, Tanami Gold NL, has approval to produce approximately 400,000 tonnes of ore for gold production from the two open pits Sandpiper and Kookaburra (Stage 2). A 35 kilometre haul road was also approved to be constructed, between the Stage 2 site and the existing Coyote Stage 1 operation.

The EPA noted in Bulletin 1261 that the clearing and use of the haul road would disturb portions of known Mulgara (*Dasyercus cristicauda*) habitats (schedule 1). The report also noted that the proponent agreed to impose speed limits throughout Mulgara (*Dasyercus cristicauda*) habitat areas, and ensure that these locations had speed limiting signage positioned accordingly.

These significant concerns regarding potential impact to Mulgara (*Dasyercus cristicauda*) lead to the inclusion of Condition 5-4 in Ministerial Statement 757.

Condition 5-4 is the subject of this Report and is set out below:

*5-4 The proponent shall impose speed limits of 40 kilometres per hour for all vehicles in Mulgara (*Dasyercus cristicauda*) habitat areas, which shall be appropriately signed.*

On 20 September 2010, the proponent wrote to you to request that Condition 5-4 be amended in Ministerial Statement 749. The rationale provided for this was that the species of Mulgara thought to be present in the project location, was now understood to be a less conservation significant species, known as Mulgara (*Dasyercus blythi*), and hence this level of protection was no longer warranted. Accordingly, the proponent requested that the imposed compliance speed limit of 40 kilometres per hour, and the general project haul road speed limit of 80 kilometres per hour (in other areas), be changed to an overall 85 kilometres per hour for the length of the haul road.

## **Discussion**

The intent of Condition 5-4 was to limit potential impact to this species on the haul road, by limiting vehicle speeds in known habitat areas. However, the OEPA now accepts the proponent's view that the particular species of mulgara present at this location has been reclassified, and is now known to be Mulgara (*Dasyercus blythi*) and not Mulgara (*Dasyercus cristicauda*), which does not hold as high a level of conservation significance (schedule 4).

Consequently, the proposal to remove the speed limit restrictions applied to mulgara habitat areas in this project is now supported. Finally, in their letter to you, the proponent also requested that the overall haul road speed limit be raised from 80 to 85 kilometres per hour. This overall 80 kilometre per hour haul road speed limit is derived from commitments made from the proponent in Bulletin 1261.

After consideration by the OEPA it is not recommended that this change to 85 kilometres per hour be approved, as in Bulletin 1261 the EPA considered fauna protection to be of significant importance, a number of number of conservation significant fauna species potentially inhabit the area, and a Woma Python (*Aspidites ramsayi*) (schedule 1) has already been reported killed on the haul road under the current maximum speeds. The proponent has indicated that they accept this reasoning, and the condition recommended to you below.

Lastly, after discussion of this change with the EPA board, a request was made to ensue it was emphasised that the new condition, and associated speed limits, were amended considering conservation aspects only, and not considering safety. Hence the condition below has now been revised to cater for this requirement.

**EPA Recommendation**

That the existing condition 5-4 in Ministerial Statement 749 be replaced with:

*5-4 The proponent shall impose speed limits of 80 kilometres per hour for all vehicles on the haul road, or at lesser speeds as required to ensure effective project safety.*

**Dr Paul Vogel**  
CHAIRMAN

May 2011