



**Minister for Environment; Disability Services
Deputy Leader of the Legislative Council**

Our Ref: 62-05662

Hon Matthew Swinbourn MLC
Chair
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
4 Harvest Terrace
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Dear Mr Swinbourn *Math*

Thank you for your letter received in this office on 5 January 2018 regarding Petition No. 31 – Helena-Aurora Range.

I note the terms of the petition relate to protecting the Helena-Aurora Range, its values and surrounds in a class A national park and I am advised there have been further developments since the petition was tabled and referred to the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs.

A rigorous assessment by the Environmental Protection Authority found the proposed mining operations by Mineral Resources Limited to be unacceptable on environmental grounds. A thorough examination of the environmental, social and economic benefits of the proposed mining operations found that any benefit did not justify the significant environmental impacts the proposal would have.

On 21 December 2017, after consultation with relevant decision-makers, I announced that the proposal for mining of iron ore on the Helena-Aurora Range in the Helena-Aurora Range Conservation Park would not be approved and that options will now be investigated for creating a class A reserve over the range.

As announced, it is now my intention to work with my Ministerial colleagues to progress the full protection of the range (and surrounds) on behalf of the McGowan Labor Government, so that it can continue to be enjoyed by locals and visitors to the region well into the future. In addition to the class A nature reserve proposal for the Die Hardy Range, and the expansion of the Mount Manning reserves, this position of the Government is a major step forward in addressing the balance between mining and conservation for the banded iron formation (BIF) range(s) of the Yilgarn Craton, through protection of the one of the key ranges with the very highest conservation value in a secure conservation reserve.

Noting the other matters identified in the petition and your letter, I provide the following additional summary comments:

- The concentration of biodiversity, landscape, heritage and social amenity values of the existing and proposed reserves in the Helena-Aurora Range and Mount Manning Region identified in the petition is recognised by the Government.
- The extensive history of reservation proposals in the Mount Manning Region is noted.
- The potential for proposals to mine BIF ranges to have significant and permanent impact on the conservation values of these ranges is also noted.
- There are now two high value BIF ranges in the Mount Manning Region proposed for class A reservation and protection, the Die Hardy and Helena-Aurora ranges.
- The boundaries of the class A reserve over the Helena-Aurora Range and surrounds, including the need for any temporary exclusions for existing operations, will be part of future work with my Ministerial colleagues.
- By protecting the highest value areas in class A reserves, any future applications for development will require the approval of Parliament.
- In addition, following the creation of new reserves, the requirements of Section 24 of the *Mining Act 1978* will be applicable to both new and existing mineral exploration and development related tenements within the reserve. For class A nature reserves and national parks, my concurrence is required prior to the Minister for Mines and Petroleum consenting to any mining activities in the tenement areas of reserves. In all cases, my consideration of concurrence to mining in these reserves will take into account the full suite of reserve values and the designated purpose and management objectives for the affected reserves under the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984*.
- Assessment of the conservation threat status of flora taxa associated with the Helena-Aurora Range and BIF ranges more generally is continuing on the basis of standard processes and available resources.

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to comment on the petition.

Yours sincerely



Hon Stephen Dawson MLC
MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT
17 JAN 2018