

# HON. ROBIN CHAPPLE MLC

Hon Matthew Swinbourn MLC  
Chairman  
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs

Via email: [env@parliament.wa.gov.au](mailto:env@parliament.wa.gov.au)

Dear Hon Matthew Swinbourn

## **PETITION NO 31 – Helena Aurora Range**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a written submission regarding the protection of the outstanding natural, geological, cultural and social values of the Helena Aurora (Bungalbin) Range (the Range) via the gazetting of the range as an 'A' Class Reserve and National Park.

The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) WA announced on the 1 December, 2014 that it deemed the proposal from Mineral Resources Limited to mine the Range 'environmentally unacceptable'. The Minister for Environment announced on 24 November, 2017 that he supports the EPA's assessment and dismissed industry appeals to mine the Range. As far back as 2007, the EPA recommended that the Range be turned into an 'A' Class Reserve and National Park.

In the wake of the EPA's and Minister's announcements, the aim of this submission is to bring to your attention the proposal that the Range become an 'A' Class Reserve and National Park, to protect its biodiversity assets from all forms of mining, since the final decision on the mine proposal is still to be made by the WA Government.

The Range has been part of the country of the Kalamaia Kapurn people who call it Bungalbin. The concentration of conservation values associated with the Range, established that, for its size, this range is one of the more significant biodiversity assets in WA.

The Range is a part of the Mount Manning Region, which includes the Die Hardy Range and Yorkradine Hills, the Windarling Range, the Jackson Range and the Koolyanobbing Range, and also have very high environmental significance, especially as refugia for endemic rare species. Within each range, the size and complexity of massive Banded Iron Stone Formation (BIF) rock outcrops with cliffs was correlated with the presence of rare flora. Intact BIF ranges are important to maintain the genetic diversity within populations of endemic rare flora and to allow survival during periods of adverse climate.

The entire Mount Manning Reserve (MMR) has exceptionally high landscape diversity, including interconnected intact sandplain, woodland and salt lake habitats of critical importance for fauna and flora that are not represented in other reserves or have declining populations in the wheatbelt. These areas are also worthy of conservation for Aboriginal heritage, geodiversity and tourism. Transitional areas in the interzone, such as the MMR, may also provide species with refugia or alternate habitats in intact complex landscapes during periods of climate change.

Since the Koolyanobbing mine expansion was approved, it has become apparent that further mining of BIF ranges of highest conservation significance in the MMR region is likely to result in major impacts to BIF endemic threatened species and communities. Thus, it is unlikely that further mining in the areas of highest conservation value, proposed as an A Class Nature Reserve could be justified.

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The Range features special, ancient, geology and landscapes including BIF, and the geology of the range is approximately 2.6 billion years old.

The Range is home to many rare, endemic and threatened species, including:

- 5 Endemic flora species
- 2 Declared rare flora
- 14 Priority species
- 3 Threatened fauna species
- 10 BIF-dependent flora species
- 1 Priority one ecological community
- ~350 Native plant species in total
- ~113 Native fauna species

The Range has outstanding Heritage values, including: topographical and biodiversity values as a BIF range; two Declared Rare Flora (*Tetratheca aphylla* subsp. *aphylla* and *Leucopogon spectabilis*); 14 Priority plant species; and one Specially Protected Fauna (*Peregrine Falcon*), as well as Threatened Fauna.

The Range and MMR should be recognised as a Biodiversity Hotspot for its combination of high levels of species richness, concentration of rare and endemic flora, restricted ecological communities and the threatening processes associated with the mineral potential of the BIF Range environments, which coincide with the highest concentration of threatened and endemic species and communities in the region.

Areas of the highest conservation value and surrounding areas in the MMR must be protected from mining by:

- Establishing an 'A' Class Reserve and National Park to include the highest priority conservation areas.
- Defining temporary exclusions for mining and mining infrastructure in the proposed A Class Reserve and National Park in areas where mining is currently approved. These areas should become part of the Reserve after successful rehabilitation (consistent with the approach of Ministerial Statement 627).
- Proponents should be advised that proposals for further mining in areas of the highest conservation value are unlikely to be found environmentally acceptable.

Once the 'A' Class Reserve and National Park is established, renewal of mineral tenements and granting of new tenements should not be supported. The 32 flora taxa considered on existing information to be endemic to small areas in this region should be assessed for Declared Rare Flora listing, in recognition of the increased threats to species endemic to BIF ranges. This review should take into account the degree of protection offered by the 'A' Class Reserve and National Park. Further flora and vegetation surveys be undertaken to better define the status of: apparently rare and endemic flora; large areas of sandplains and woodlands not adequately surveyed within the MMR; and rare flora and communities in Jaurdi and Mt Elvire Conservation Parks.

Yours sincerely,



The Hon Robin Chapple MLC  
Member for the Mining and Pastoral Region  
30 November 2017