

To:  
Emily Murray  
Senior Environmental Assessment Officer  
NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure  
12 Darcy Street, Parramatta, NSW

23/03/2026

Our ref: PS22957-WSP-ENV-LTR-Rev02-Dargues Mod Scoping Letter  
Your ref: MP10\_0054

Dear Emily,

**RE: Dargues Gold Project (MP10\_0054) – Proposed modification**

This scoping letter has been prepared by Big Island Mining Pty Ltd (BIM, a wholly owned subsidiary of Aurelia Metals Limited (Aurelia)) to request environmental assessment requirements for a proposed modification to the approved Dargues Gold Project (MP10\_0054). The project was approved in 2011 and has been modified on six occasions.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

BIM owns and operates the Dargues Gold Mine (the project), located near Majors Creek in the Southern Tablelands region of New South Wales, approximately 13 kilometres south of Braidwood and approximately 60 kilometres southeast of Canberra. The project (MP10\_0054) was approved in February 2012 by the Land and Environment Court under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act) for the development and operation of an underground gold mine and associated infrastructure. Since the original approval, the development consent has been modified on six separate occasions (Modifications 1 to 6).

BIM is seeking to modify the approved Dargues Gold Project (MP10\_0054) to update vegetation mapping, related biodiversity information and associated consent requirements following detailed ecological surveys that have been completed since the project approval.

### 1.1. Strategic context

Vegetation mapping approved under development consent MP10\_0054 was prepared using ecological information available at the time of approval. Subsequent field surveys that have occurred across the project and surrounding area identified differences between the approved mapping and vegetation communities present onsite. To address these findings, BIM, is proposing to lodge a modification application (Modification 7) to update vegetation mapping and associated biodiversity references in the consent to reflect verified ecological survey results.

The proposed modification does not result in any physical or boundary changes to the approved project or changes to the broader strategic context of the project.

## 2. APPROVED PROJECT

The approved project (MP10\_0054) includes extraction and processing of up to 415,000 tonnes of gold ore per year (1.6 million tonnes in total) over an approved mine life of up to seven years. Key components of the approved development include:

- a box cut portal and decline, fuel store, ventilation rise, power and water supply
- a processing plant and office area which would include an integrated run-of-mine (ROM) pad/temporary waste rock emplacement, crushing, grinding, gravity and floatation circuits, site offices, workshop, laydown area, ablutions facilities, car parking, and associated infrastructure

- a tailings storage facility (TSF)
- a water management system, including 8 dams and an associated water reticulation system
- a site access road and intersection to allow site access from Majors Creek Road
- ancillary infrastructure, including soil stockpiles, core yards, internal roads and tracks and surface water management structures.

Processed ore would be transported from the site by road and the site would be progressively rehabilitated. Since the original approval, the development consent has been modified on six occasions.

## 3. PROPOSED MODIFICATION

### 3.1. Background

Updated ecological surveys have confirmed the presence of Plant Community Type (PCT) 3348 within the project area. However, this vegetation is not associated with the Tableland Basalt Forest Endangered Ecological Community (EEC), listed as 'endangered' under *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*, referenced in the development consent MP10\_0054. Surveys also confirmed that Natural Temperate Grassland, listed as 'critically endangered' under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, is not present within the approved disturbance area or nominated offset areas.

Since 2021, BIM has consulted with the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) regarding the establishment of a Biodiversity Stewardship Agreement (BSA) to meet biodiversity offset requirements. Through this process, DCCEEW has accepted that PCT 3348 is representative of vegetation within the project area; however, is not associated with the Tableland Basalt Forest EEC which was referenced in the consent. As a result, the approved vegetation mapping and biodiversity consent conditions, including Conditions 32 to 35 and Appendix 4: Biodiversity Offset Strategy of the development consent MP10\_0054, no longer accurately reflect verified ecological conditions.

The proposed modification (Modification 7) seeks to update the vegetation mapping and remove reference to Tableland Basalt Forest and Natural Temperate Grassland from the development consent so that the approval accurately reflects confirmed field survey findings. The proposed modification would not change approved mining operations, the disturbance footprint, or project activities. The modification is limited to updating biodiversity information and making associated changes to consent conditions. The proposed modification therefore ensures that the consent accurately reflects ecological information.

### 3.2. Proposed modification scope

Modification 7 would involve modification to conditions of consent for consistency with vegetation mapping and calculations from recent ecological assessments. While the nature and operation of the approved project would remain unchanged, the modification would update biodiversity obligations. The proposed modification seeks to modify conditions 32-35 in Schedule 3, Appendix 4 and Appendix 5 to remove reference to Tableland Basalt Forest and Natural Temperate Grassland. Proposed modifications to Schedule 3 conditions are in bold in Table 2.

Table 1 Proposed modification to conditions in Schedule 3 (in bold)

Cond.	Relevant conditions of consent and proposed modification																						
32	<p>Biodiversity Offset</p> <p>The Applicant must implement the offset strategy outlined in Table 9, described in the EA, and shown in Appendix 4 to the satisfaction of the Secretary.</p> <p><i>Table 9: Biodiversity Offset</i></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Community Type</th> <th>Area (ha)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Ribbon Gum Forest<sup>‡</sup></td> <td>8.7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Fragmented Ribbon Gum Forest*</td> <td>7.1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Regenerating wattles</td> <td>7.6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Exotic vegetation</td> <td>5.1</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Natural Temperate Grassland**</b></td> <td><b>0.20</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Native – dominated pasture</td> <td>265.7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Exotic pasture</td> <td><b>2.57</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Largely disturbed land</td> <td>3.9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>River Peppermint Open Forest</td> <td>1.3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>TOTAL</td> <td>302.1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>* Listed as an EEC under the <i>Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016</i></p> <p>** Listed as a CEEC under the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, 1999</i></p>	Community Type	Area (ha)	Ribbon Gum Forest <sup>‡</sup>	8.7	Fragmented Ribbon Gum Forest*	7.1	Regenerating wattles	7.6	Exotic vegetation	5.1	<b>Natural Temperate Grassland**</b>	<b>0.20</b>	Native – dominated pasture	265.7	Exotic pasture	<b>2.57</b>	Largely disturbed land	3.9	River Peppermint Open Forest	1.3	TOTAL	302.1
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33	<p><del>The Applicant must ensure that the offset area is managed in a manner that would ensure the regeneration of native grassland, which is consistent with the Natural Temperate Grassland EEC.</del></p>																						
35	<p>Biodiversity Management Plan</p> <p>The Applicant must prepare a Biodiversity Management Plan for the project to the satisfaction of the Secretary. This plan must:</p> <p>be prepared in consultation with CPHR, and submitted to the Secretary for approval prior to construction;</p> <p>include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>an assessment of the potential impacts of groundwater drawdown on groundwater dependent (phreatophytic) vegetation, including the <del>Tableland Basalt Forest EEC and Araluen Scarp Grassy Forest EEC</del> in the Majors Creek State Conservation Area using suitable methodology;</li> <li><del>detailed baseline data on the health status of the Tableland Basalt Forest EEC within the project site;</del></li> <li>mitigation and/or offsetting measures if adverse impacts on phreatophytic vegetation are predicted;</li> <li>timing for the implementation of mitigation and/or offsetting measures;</li> <li>scheduling for the implementation of the biodiversity offset;</li> <li>detailed performance and completion criteria for the implementation of the biodiversity offset;</li> </ul>																						

- a detailed description of the measures that would be implemented to manage the remnant vegetation and habitat within the offset area, and ensure the biodiversity offset is suitably implemented, including the procedures for:
  - revegetating or regenerating parts of the offset area, if required;
  - managing or improving the quality of existing vegetation in the offset area;
  - controlling weeds, feral pests and access;
  - managing bushfires;
  - fencing around the water storage dam approved under Modification 5 to restrict native animals from accessing the proposed water storage dam; and
- details of who would be responsible for monitoring, reviewing and implementing the plan.

## 4. STATUTORY CONTEXT

The Dargues Gold Project (MP10\_0054) is classified as State Significant Development and has been modified on six occasions (Modifications 1 to 6). As the original development consent was granted by the Land and Environment Court, the proposed modification to the consent would be made under Section 4.56 of the EP&A Act.

The assessment of biodiversity on site would be done in accordance with the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*.

## 5. CONSULTATION

BIM would consult with NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water - Conservation, Planning and Offsets (CPO) to discuss the proposed modification.

The Community Consultative Committee would be informed of the proposed modification. Given the specific elements of the proposed modification, BIM is not proposing to conduct wider community consultation.

## 6. PROPOSED ASSESSMENT

A Modification Report would be prepared in accordance with the State significant development guidelines – preparing a modification report (DPIE, 2022) to accompany the updated vegetation mapping.

Technical assessment by ecologists would be used in preparation of the modification report including data from ecological field surveys. The modification would include updated mapping to reflect confirmed vegetation on site. The modification would also review the statement of commitments and provide suggested updates as appropriate.

No additional specialist reporting is proposed as the proposed modification would have no material environmental impact. The modification seeks to clarify site conditions.

## 7. CONCLUSION

BIM is seeking to modify the approved Dargues Gold Project (MP10\_0054) to update vegetation mapping, related biodiversity information and associated consent requirements following detailed ecological surveys that have been completed since the project approval.

The purpose of this letter is to request that the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure:

1. confirm the proposed assessment pathway under Section 4.56 of the EP&A Act for the modification described in Section 4, and



2. provide environmental assessment requirements to support the preparation of Modification 7.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. Please contact me if you require additional information or would like to discuss this letter.

Sincerely,

**Jonathon Thompson**

Aurelia Metals

Group Manager, Sustainability

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