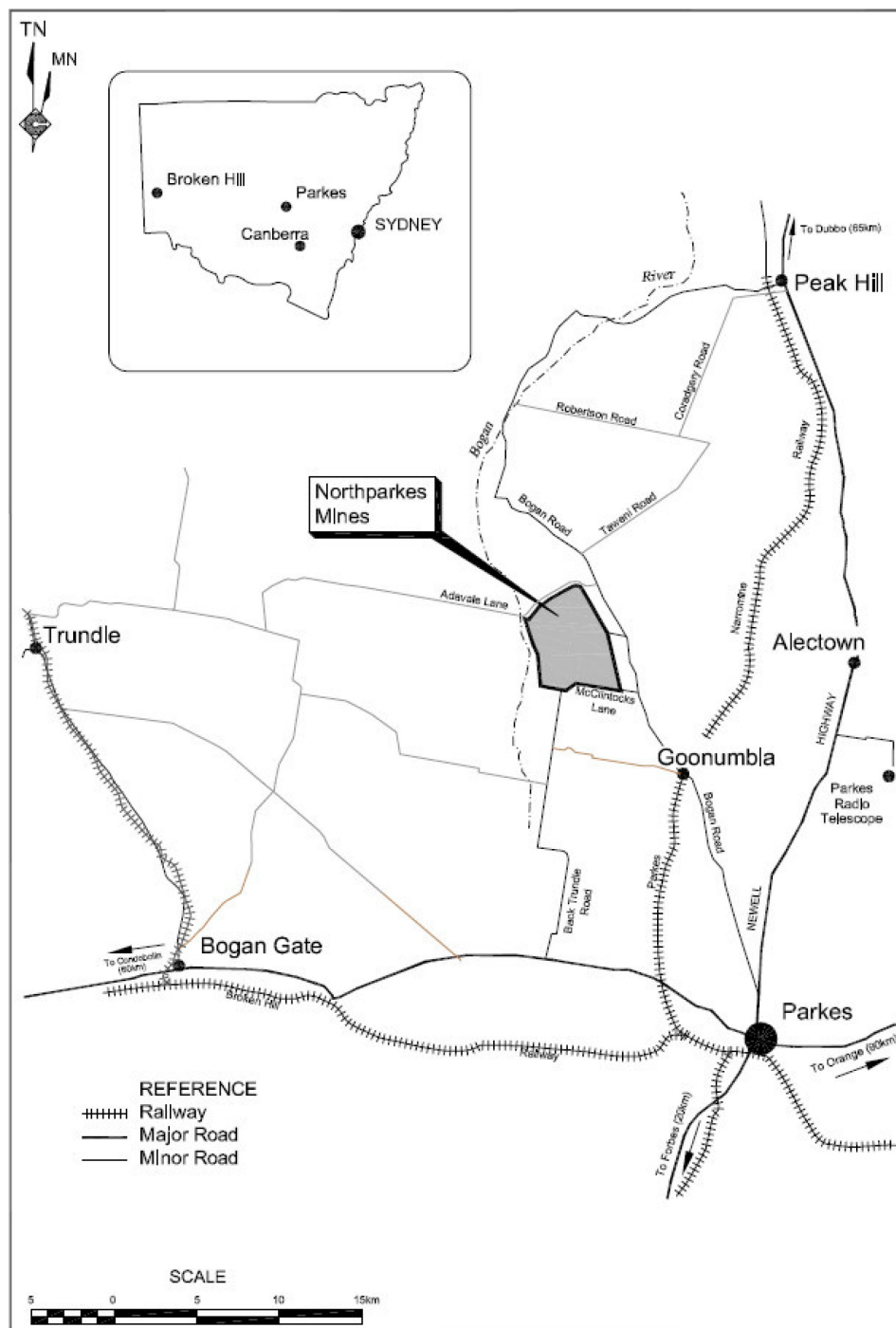


# ASSESSMENT REPORT

**Section 75W Modification**  
**Northparkes Mines (MP 06\_0026 Mod 2)**

## 1 BACKGROUND

North Mining Limited (North), a joint venture between Rio Tinto and the Sumitomo Group, owns and operates Northparkes Mines, a gold and copper ore mining and processing operation 27 kilometres northwest of Parkes in Central NSW (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** Northparkes Mines' local and regional context

Mining operations commenced in 1993, and the mine currently has a workforce of approximately 530 people. The mine's operations are regulated by a project approval granted by the Minister in 2007, which replaced the mine's previous development consents. The Minister's approval has been modified once and allows North to:

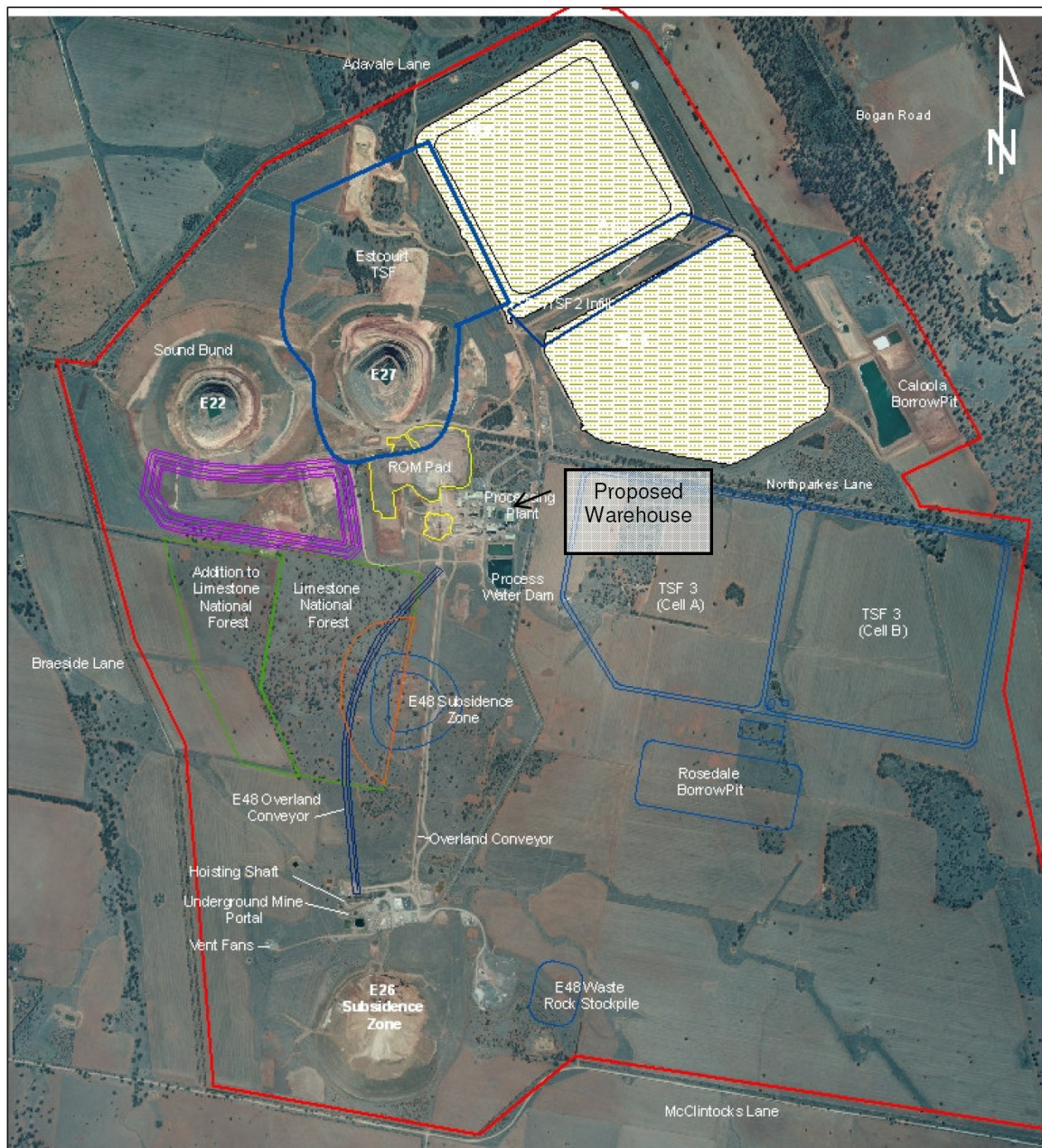
- extract copper/gold ore and process it on-site, to a limit of 8.5 million tonnes per annum (Mtpa) until 2025;
- transport ore concentrate by road to the Goonumbla Rail Siding and then by rail to Port Kembla for export; and
- rehabilitate the site.

Northparkes Mines comprises both surface and underground mining operations. These include (see Figure 2):

- **the E22 and E27 open-cut pits**, which commenced in 1993 and initially ceased in 1998. Both pits were subsequently re-opened, with E27 closing in 2005 and E22 expected to close in 2010;
- **the E26 underground mine**, which commenced in 1995 and is forecast to continue operating until 2020; and
- **the E48 underground mine**, which is currently being developed.

## 2 PROPOSED MODIFICATION

On 14 October 2009, North asked the Minister to modify the terms of its approval under section 75W of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act).



**Figure 2: Location of proposed warehouse**



North is proposing to establish a 1200 square metre (m<sup>2</sup>) covered warehouse and adjacent vehicle unloading area in the open storage area adjacent to the mine's processing facilities (see Figure 3). This would enable North to store all equipment for the mine on site (it currently leases a warehouse in Parkes to store some equipment).



**Figure 2:** Location of proposed warehouse

The new warehouse would comprise a 5 metre high steel-framed building over a concrete slab. The associated vehicle unloading area would also be concrete, and a 100 metre long bitumen access road would be established to link the vehicle unloading area with an existing internal road.

### **3 STATUTORY CONTEXT**

#### **Approval Authority**

The area of the proposed warehouse exceeds the limit of 300m<sup>2</sup> for a shed to be considered as exempt development under the Mining SEPP.

The Minister was the approval authority for the original project application, and is consequently the approval authority for this application. However, the Executive Director, Major DA Assessments may determine this application under the Minister's delegation of 4 March 2009.

#### **Modification**

The proposed modification represents a minor change to the approved operations, which would not change the nature or intensity of these operations. Consequently the Department is satisfied that the proposed modification would not involve a "radical transformation" of the project, and that it can be determined under Section 75W of the EP&A Act.

#### **Exhibition and Notification**

Under Section 75W of the EP&A Act, the Department is not required to notify or exhibit the application. Given the minor nature of the proposal and its minimal environmental impact, the Department has not undertaken any consultation for the proposal.

### **4 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

The Department has assessed the merits of the proposed modification in accordance with the relevant objects and requirements of the EP&A Act. A summary of the Department's assessment is provided below.

<i><b>Issue</b></i>	<i><b>Consideration</b></i>
<i>Noise</i>	<p>The main noise emissions associated with the proposal would be due to construction of the warehouse facility, which would be temporary. North has not sought to amend the existing operational noise criteria for the mine and therefore these criteria would continue to apply during construction of the warehouse.</p> <p>The handling and storage of materials in an enclosed warehouse as opposed to open air storage would be a potential improvement on the noise environment but this is unlikely to be noticeable.</p> <p>The Department is satisfied that the proposal is unlikely to result in any significant noise impacts.</p>
<i>Surface Water</i>	<p>The works are proposed within areas already disturbed at the mine. The Department is satisfied that no change to existing surface water impacts would occur and that existing site drainage controls would adequately manage the potential impacts of the modification.</p>
<i>Biodiversity</i>	<p>The works are proposed within areas already disturbed at the mine. A stand of planted eucalypts and acacias is located adjacent to the existing road, which would not be disturbed. The Department is satisfied that the proposal would not impact on flora or fauna at the site.</p>
<i>Air Quality</i>	<p>The proposed modification is within existing disturbed areas and would not result in an increase in potential dust emissions from the mine.</p>
<i>Visual</i>	<p>The warehouse would be located in an area which contains other similar buildings and infrastructure associated with the mine's processing facilities. Given the nature of the surrounding infrastructure, the Department is satisfied that there would be no visual impacts on surrounding residents.</p>
<i>Heritage</i>	<p>All works associated with the proposed modification would occur within areas previously disturbed by the mine. The Department is satisfied that no additional impacts on heritage items would result.</p>
<i>Other Issues</i>	<p>There are no other project features that are affected or influenced by the proposed modification. The Department considers the proposed modification would not significantly change the environmental impacts of the mine and would not materially change the approved mine.</p>

## **5 RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS**

The Department has drafted recommended conditions for the modification. North does not object to the imposition of these conditions.

## **6 CONCLUSION**

The Department has assessed the modification application and supporting information on the proposal in accordance with the relevant requirements of the EP&A Act, including the objects of the Act and the principles of ecologically sustainable development.

Given the minor nature of the proposed modification and the fact the warehouse would be constructed on an already disturbed area, the Department is satisfied that the impacts of the modification would be negligible.

Consequently, the Department is satisfied that the proposed modification is in the public interest and should be approved, subject to conditions.

## **7 RECOMMENDATION**

It is RECOMMENDED that the Executive Director, as delegate of the Minister:

- consider the findings and recommendations of this report;
- determine that the proposed modification would not "radically transform" the approved project;
- approve the proposed modification under Section 75W of the EP&A Act, subject to the conditions set out in the attached notice of modification; and
- sign the attached notice of modification.

Howard Reed  
Manager, Mining