



25 August 2022

Dear Minister Whitby

I am writing on behalf of the Bibbulmun Track Foundation to express our concern regarding the increasing impact of mining in WA's jarrah forest.

The Bibbulmun Track (the Track) is WA's premier long-distance walking trail stretching 1000kms from Kalamunda to Albany. The Track has gained a reputation as a world class trail attracting thousands of West Australians and visitors to the south west each year.

A 2015 survey showed that over 300,000 days are spent on the Track each year generating around \$13million in economic benefit – much of that in regional areas. In addition to individuals, families and tourists, the Track is used by schools and youth groups for outdoor recreation. Use of the Track, and hiking in general, has increased exponentially since then with the physical and mental health benefits of spending time in nature widely accepted.

Although WA is a big place, the area of it particularly suited to bush walking is not vast when you take account of WA's population centres. The bulk of WA's population live on the coastal plain between Perth and Bunbury. For most of them the Darling Range is the closest large area most suited to bush walking.

In the late 1980's the Track was realigned between Kalamunda and Dwellingup to avoid conflict with bauxite mining. In the 90's the Track was again being impacted by mining, forestry operations, and water catchment issues.

At this time, a major overhaul of the route occurred with only 10% of the original Track retained. The 'new' Bibbulmun Track was largely purpose built and aligned through national parks and reserves to take in the most scenic routes to provide people with a chance to immerse themselves in the natural environment.

Since the opening of the 'new' Bibbulmun Track in 1998 the rate of clearing in the Northern Jarrah Forest has accelerated with more than 11,000 ha cleared in the past decade alone. Rather than an immersive experience in nature, walkers in this region are often accompanied by the sounds of mining, and many of the expansive views are now marred by large scars on the landscape.

The rate of replanting and restoration of these areas does not appear to be keeping pace with the clearing of more forest. The success of the rehabilitation is also questionable and the cumulative impacts of logging, clearing and climate change on the forests have been profound over the decades.

We are seriously concerned about the impact of the proposed expansion of bauxite mining operations on our forest, wildlife, climate and rivers. It is critically important that the areas already cleared are rehabilitated and that the success of this rehabilitation is proven before any more clearing (if any) is approved.

It is also essential for future generations that the integrity of the Bibbulmun Track is maintained as:

- a continuous long-distance trail
- a quality 'wilderness' experience

Yours Sincerely

Linda Daniels
Executive Director