

<https://consult.dcceew.gov.au/national-environmental-standard-for-matters-of-national-environmental-significance-mnes>

29 May 2026

Dear Minister;

Re: National Environmental Standard for Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES)

Australia's aluminium industry is central to the nation's economic strength, industrial capability and long-term prosperity. It supports regional communities and skilled jobs, providing incomes for more than 75,000 Australian families, predominantly in regional Australia and contributes around \$18B a year to Australia's Gross Domestic Product. Australia is one of the world's largest producers of bauxite and the leading global exporter of alumina. Decades of investment have created an integrated aluminium value chain with deep technical expertise and international significance.

The Australian Aluminium Council (the Council) represents Australia's bauxite mining, alumina refining, aluminium smelting and downstream processing industries. The Council and its members have been actively engaged in consultation on reforms to the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act*, as part of a broader suite of policy reforms needed to support the ongoing operation of Australia's vertically integrated aluminium industry, including securing existing facilities and enabling future investment.

Aluminium is essential to transport and infrastructure, construction and manufacturing, defence capability and emerging technologies - making it a strategic national asset. The industry's ability to continue to support this sovereign and industrial capability depends on reliable and competitive access to the bauxite that underpins the entire Australian aluminium value chain, as well as emerging critical minerals opportunities including, but not limited to, gallium, high-purity alumina and fluoride compounds. The foundational step in enabling this access is the environmental approvals process.

The National Environmental Standards (NES) must deliver on their stated objectives in order to effectively support the operation of the reformed EPBC Act framework. Decisions made now will shape Australia's role in global aluminium markets for decades. Globally, most bauxite is sourced from surface mines in tropical and sub-tropical regions, where deposits typically occur in extensive, relatively thin near-surface layers beneath a small depth of overburden. Because bauxite deposits often cover a very large area, bauxite mining involves disturbance of comparatively large land areas compared to the mining of other minerals - though for a shorter duration - making it well suited to progressive rehabilitation. Australian bauxite deposits have high grades and are shallow and relatively easy to mine. While maintaining high environmental, social and governance standards is essential, it is also important to recognise that global demand for bauxite and aluminium will continue to be met from alternative jurisdictions at an arguably lower environmental standard, if supply is not available from Australia.

The Council welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on the draft MNES Standard. In developing these standards, it is important that they provide clear, practical requirements that deliver measurable improvements in environmental outcomes. The NES should reflect the best available information from industry experience, research and collaborative approaches, while also recognising the internationally competitive environment in which Australian industry operates. The NES must also operate collectively within the broader framework, including through prioritised bilateral arrangements with States and Territories and through alignment with standards yet to be developed, such as the First Nations Standard.

On technical issues, related to the MNES Standard, the Council supports the submissions of the Minerals Council of Australia (MCA) and Chamber of Mines and Energy WA (CMEWA), which have large overlapping Membership bases.

The Council is happy to discuss this Standard specifically relates to aluminium and bauxite operations.

Kind regards,



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