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Chapter Twelve Offsets

Winchelsea Island
(Akwamburrkba)
Manganese Mine: Draft
Environmental Impact
Statement



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Key Project Terms

Term	Definition or Elaboration
Adaptive Management	Systematic process for incrementally improving management practices by learning from the outcomes of past and current practices.
AUS China International Mining	AUS China International Mining Pty Ltd
CDM Smith	CDM Smith Australia Pty Ltd
Disturbance Envelope	Defined as the maximum area within which the Project disturbance could occur. The disturbance envelope for the Project encompasses 739 ha, inclusive of the terrestrial mining area and infrastructure, marine infrastructure, dredge spoil disposal area and transshipment area.
Environmental Aspect	An element of the Winchelsea Minings activities, products or services that can interact with the environment.
Environmental Impact	Change to the environment whether adverse or beneficial, wholly or partially resulting from Winchelsea Mining's environmental aspects. Environmental impacts can be caused directly or indirectly from a Project activity or cumulatively with other non-Project related activities in a set area.
Environmental Factor	The NT EPA listed environmental objectives to identify environmental matters that have value to the Northern Territory and that need to be protected; and to state the objective to be achieved for each matter. The NT EPA has prepared these environmental objectives and organised these in structured divisions of the environment, called environmental factors.
GHAC	Groote Holdings Aboriginal Corporation
Infrastructure Footprint	Defined as the area subject to direct placement of infrastructure and material inclusive of the terrestrial and wharf components. This area excludes the dredge spoil disposal area and transshipment area as no permanent physical infrastructure will be placed in these areas. The infrastructure footprint encompasses 339 ha within the Project area.
Project	The Project refers to the Winchelsea Island Manganese Mine Project. The Project includes establishment of a manganese mine extracting from nine separate extraction areas covering, associated terrestrial infrastructure, wharf and barge loading facility, dredged access channel, dredge spoil disposal, transshipment and cyclone moorings. The Project is inclusive of all infrastructure within the nominated Project area and directly associated activities occurring outside that area.
Project Area	The Project area is defined as wholly including mineral lease for exploration activities 32704, coastal and marine areas adjacent and connecting to mineral lease 32704, the dredge spoil disposal area and transshipment area. The entire Project area covers 1,680 ha.
Significant Impact	A significant impact of an action is an impact of major consequence having regard to: (a) the context and intensity of the impact; and (b) the sensitivity, value and quality of the environment impacted on and the duration, magnitude and geographic extent of the impact.
Sitzler	Sitzler Pty Ltd
Study Area	Refers to the area of survey or investigation for a specific study. This area may be beyond the Project area or disturbance envelope.
Tailings Storage Facility	A specially engineered and constructed impoundment into which tailings (residue) from the ore processing plant are deposited for placement in perpetuity. The storage facility is constructed with confining embankments consisting of earthen material (e.g., rock and soil) and capped following closure.
Winchelsea Island	Akwamburrkba

Term	Definition or Elaboration
Winchelsea Mining	Winchelsea Mining Pty Ltd
Xenith	Xenith Consulting Pty Ltd

Acronyms, Abbreviations and Units

Abbreviation, Acronym or Unit	Definition
AAAC	Anindilyakwa Advancement Aboriginal Corporation
AAPA	Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AFANT	Armature Fisherman's Association Northern Territory
ALARP	As Low As Reasonably Practicable
Al ₂ O ₃	Aluminium Oxide
ANC	Acid Neutralising Capacity
ARC	Arnhem Coast
ASRIS	Australian Soil Resource Information System
ASS	Acid Sulfate Soils
CAN	Australian Company Numbers
ADT	Articulated Dump Truck
ALC	Anindilyakwa Land Council
Al ₂ O ₃	Aluminium Oxide
ALRA	<i>Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976</i>
Bcm	Bank Cubic Meter
BLF	Barge Loading Facility
BLM	Blue Mud Land System
BoM	Bureau of Meteorology
BWM	International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments
CD	Chart Datum
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CP	Cemented Pisolite
CNZ	Central North Mineralisation Zone
CMZ	Central Main Mineralisation Zone
Cth	Commonwealth
CSD	Cutter Suction Dredge
CSZ	Central South Mineralisation Zone
DAFF	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
DAWE	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
DCCEEW	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

Abbreviation, Acronym or Unit	Definition
DEPWS	Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security
DIPL	Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics
DITT	Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade
Dmt	Dry Metric Tonne
DWCD	Declared Water Control District
DWT	Dead Weight Tonne
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EIL	Ecological Investigation Level
EL	Exploration Licence
EMP	Environmental Management Plan
EMS	Environmental Management System
EP Act	<i>Environmental Protection Act 2019</i>
EPBC Act	<i>Environmental Protection and Biosecurity Conservation Act 1999</i>
EPL	Environment Protection Licence
ERA	Environmentally Restricted Area
EV	Electric Vehicle
ESC	Erosion and Sediment Control
ESCP	Erosion and Sediment Control Plan
Fe	Iron
FIFO	Fly-In Fly-Out
g/cc	Gram per Cubic Centimetre
GDE	Groundwater Dependand Ecosystem
GEMCO	Groote Eylandt Mining Company
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
Grt	Groote land
ha	Hectares
HDPE	High Density Polyethylene
hp	Horsepower
HVAS	High-Volume Air Sampler
IAP2	International Association for Public Participation
IBRA	Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia
IEA	International Energy Agency
IECA	International Erosion Control Association

Abbreviation, Acronym or Unit	Definition
ILUA	Indigenous Land Use Agreement
IPA	Indigenous Protection Area
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
JORC	Joint Ore Reserve Committee
Kfh	Keepers Hut Land System
kg	Kilogram
km	Kilometres
ktpa	Kilo tonnes per annum
kW	KiloWatt
LA	Los Angeles
LAT	Lowest astronomical tide
LDMA	Local Decision-Making Agreements
Lit1	Littoral 1 Land System
LOM	Life of Mine
LWM	Low Water Mark
m	Metre
m ³	Cubic meter
m ³ /hr	Cubic meter per hour
MagL	Manganiferous Laterite
mbgl	metres below ground level
MIA	Mine Infrastructure Area
ML	Megalitres
MLWM	Mean Low Water Mark
ML/yr	Megalitres per year
MMP	Mining Management Plans
MMZ	Main Mineralised Zone
MN	Mangcrete
Mn	Manganese
MNES	Matters of National Environmental Significance
MP	Member of Parliament
MRCP	Mine Rehabilitation and Closure Plan
MSL	Mean Sea Level
Mt	Million Tonnes

Abbreviation, Acronym or Unit	Definition
mtpa	Million Tonnes per Annum
MW	Megawatt
NAF	Non-Acid Forming
NAGD	National Assessment Guidelines for Dredging
NEZ	North East Mineralised Zone
NEPM	Nation Environment Protection Measure
NLC	Northern Land Council
NT	Northern Territory
NT EPA	Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority
NW	North West
OGV	Ocean going vessel
P	Phosphorus
P ₂ O ₅	Phosphorus Pentoxide
PC	Personal Computer
PCS	Process Control System
PID	Proportional-Integral-Derivative
PLT	Point Load Result
ppt	Parts per Thousand
PM	Pisolitic Manganese
PMLU	Post-Mining Land use
PM _{2.5}	Particulate Matter 2.5 micrometres or less
PM ₁₀	Particulate Matter 10 micrometres or less
PSU	Practical Salinity Units
Pty Ltd	Propriety Limited
Que	Queue Land System
RC	Reverse Circulation
RMP	Risk Management Plan
ROM	Run of Mine
RDU	Royalties Development Unit
RORO	Roll-on Roll-off
RUSLE	Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation
Sea Dumping Act	<i>Environmental Protection (Sea Dumping) Act 1981</i>
SEP	Stakeholder Engagement Plan

Abbreviation, Acronym or Unit	Definition
SiO ₂	Silicon Dioxide
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
SM	Silicious Manganese
SSC	Suspended Sediment Concentration
SSTV	Site-Specific Trigger Values
TEC	Threatened Ecological Communities
t	Tonnes
ToR	Terms of Reference
TPWC Act	<i>Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 2000</i>
TSF	Tailings storage facility
TSP	Total Suspended Particulates
USGS	United States Geological Survey
WA	Western Australia
WMP	Water Management Plan
WDL	Waste Discharge Licence

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Section 12 Offsets

Developments that may have a significant impact on the environment are assessed in accordance with the *Environment Protection Act 2019* (EP Act) and Environment Protection Regulations 2020. The EP Act requires that development proponents implement a hierarchy of:

- 'Avoid significant impacts wherever possible;
- Where significant impacts cannot be avoided, mitigate those impacts to the greatest extent practicable; and
- Where significant impacts cannot be avoided or mitigated, offset the impacts' (DEPWS, 2023a).

Where a project cannot avoid or mitigate, or where measures have been applied, yet a significant residual impact remains, it may require offsetting. To support the use of offsets under the EP Act, the NT Government has established the NT Offsets Framework

The NT Offsets Framework is established under section 125(1) of the EP Act and comprises the Northern Territory Offset Principles (the Offset Principles) (DENR, 2020), Offset Policies (DEPWS, 2022a; DEPWS, 2023b) and supporting Technical Guidelines (DEPWS, 2022a; 2022b), and Administrative Guidelines⁵⁸.

The Project is being assessed at the level of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) under the EP Act and offset requirements can be applied to statutory environmental approvals under the Act. In accordance with DEPWS (2023b), 'determination of whether offsets are required will occur during the environmental assessment and approval process. Offsets can only be considered where all reasonable steps have been taken to avoid and mitigate potential impacts to the environment. Any remaining impacts that cannot be avoided or mitigated are referred to as residual impacts. Where a biodiversity offset is determined to be appropriate, the decision maker for the approval may require significant residual impacts to be offset as a condition of the approval (a biodiversity offset approval condition)'. Under the EP Act, offsets will only be necessary where residual impacts can be considered 'significant'.

Based on the environmental impact assessment findings and in alignment with principles of environmental improvement held by the Traditional Owners (TOs), Winchelsea Mining proposes to develop a Biodiversity Offset Plan outlining how offsets will be designed and delivered in accordance with the Policy and the NT Offsets Framework.

Offsets may also be required under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* Act (EPBC Act) for significant impacts on protected matters arising from the action. The NT Offsets Principles establish that there should be no duplication in offsets required by the Commonwealth and Northern Territory for projects in the Northern Territory.

Table 9.6-10 provides a summary of the significant residual impacts for the Project, as per the relevant factors and based on the full environmental assessment involving detailed field surveys and environmental assessments.

Table 11.10-1 Assessed Significant Residual Impact Per Factor

Factor	Significant Residual Impact	Proposed Offsetting
Landforms	No	No
Terrestrial Environmental Quality	No	No
Terrestrial Ecosystem	Yes	Yes (refer below)

⁵⁸ The Administrative Guidelines are currently being developed and were not available at the time of developing the draft EIS.

Factor	Significant Residual Impact	Proposed Offsetting
Hydrological Processes	No	No
Inland Water Environmental Quality	No	No
Aquatic Ecosystems	No	No
Coastal Processes	No	No
Marine Environmental Quality	No	No
Marine Ecosystems	No	No
Air Quality	No	No
Atmospheric Processes	No	No
Community and Economy	No	No
Culture and Heritage	No	No
Human Health	No	No

The Project requires a direct terrestrial disturbance of approximately 530 hectares (ha) (direct clearing extent over the 11-year Project life). In addition, up to 15.9 ha of Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems (GDE) may be indirectly impacted outside the disturbance envelope from groundwater drawdown and salinity changes, resulting in a cumulative terrestrial residual impact of 545.9 ha.

Direct and indirect disturbance from marine activities has been assessed at 141.13 ha (cumulative loss), with 16.74 ha classified as moderate to high sensitivity marine habitat (e.g., seagrasses and corals) and the remaining 124.39 ha consisting of low sensitivity bioturbated silt and sand/shell hash. All potential disturbances to marine and benthic habitats are highly localised and have been deemed of low significance due to the widespread occurrence of similar habitats both locally and regionally. Therefore, significant residual impacts from the Project are taken to account for terrestrial disturbances only (refer to Section 14- Conclusion of Predicted Impacts for a summary of predicted impacts and their significance on listed environmental factors).

The entirety of the 545.9 ha is considered habitat for several threatened species listed under the EPBC Act and the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1976* (TPWC Act), as follows:

- Northern Masked Owl (Vulnerable – EPBC Act and TPWC Act) – 545.9 ha of potential foraging and nesting habitat (habitat for one Northern Masked Owl pair);
- Northern Quoll (Endangered – EPBC Act, Critically Endangered – TPWC Act) – 545.9 ha of potential foraging and nesting habitat; and
- Ghost Bat (Vulnerable – EPBC Act, Near Threatened – TPWC Act) – 545.9 ha of potential foraging habitat.

There were several observational records of Merten's Water Monitor on Winchelsea Island from the Project surveys and Mahney (2009). However, all records are associated with the northern coastline or coastal marine sea caves in rocky shore habitat with no local access to freshwater habitats. There are no known populations within the current proposed development footprint and or the southern draining catchment areas. Therefore, the Project disturbance is not considered to pose a significant residual impact to the Merten's Water Monitor (Vulnerable, TPWC Act).

The Draft Biodiversity Offsets Policy (the Policy) adopts a habitat-focused approach to biodiversity offsets and requires offsets to be applied within the same broad habitat type as the impact that is being offset. The Policy envisages that offset activities will primarily involve the management of priority threats, which are relevant to the habitats in which the offset

is located, and the biodiversity values which have been impacted. The Project is located within the monsoonal north biome and predominately consisting of 'Forest and Woodlands' and 'Shrublands'. As per Schedule 1, Table 2 of the Draft Biodiversity Offsets Technical Guidelines (2022b), the key threats for the relevant habitats are (1) inappropriate fire regimes; (2) feral ungulates; and (3) grassy weeds.

For offsets under the Policy, management of priority threats has the goal of improving habitat condition, ultimately to the point where 'good' habitat condition is restored and can be maintained. Indicative thresholds for effective threat management within different biomes have been developed and these are described in Schedule 2 (DEPWS, 2022b). Biodiversity offset plans should describe how these thresholds will be achieved or provide robust justification for alternative threat reduction targets. Winchelsea Mining will prepare a Biodiversity Offset Plan that utilises management benchmarks for the identified habitat threats for the monsoonal north biome. Additional threats are also relevant to the Groote Archipelago and will be incorporated into the Biodiversity Offset Plan [refer to the Groote Archipelago Threatened Species Management Plan (2019 – 2028) (DEE, 2019)].

The objective of most offsets will be to deliver an improvement in habitat condition within the offset area. Groote Eylandt contains large expanses of equivalent Forest and Woodland; and Shrubland ecosystems proposed to be disturbed for the Project. These equivalent habitats on Groote Eylandt are also known to support the three listed species referenced above and are known to be impacted by degrading influences, where these occur in proximity to anthropogenic activities. As per the Groote Archipelago Threatened Species Management Plan (2019 – 2028) (DEE, 2019), Groote Eylandt and several smaller islands in the archipelago are being impacted by threats such as, inappropriate fire regimes, feral animals (cats, pigs, introduced rodents, dogs), transforming weeds, invasive ants and introduced horticultural plants.

Based on the Draft Biodiversity Offsets Technical Guidelines (DEPWS, 2022b), the total potential loss is taken to be 545.9 ha, or equivalent to 545.9 ecological units. The technical guideline requires a 20% potential gain for habitats in the monsoonal biome. The potential gain is the number of ecological units that will be gained by direct habitat management measures. An additional gain of 10% is required to address the risk of lower than expected gains and where the same offset area is being used to offset more than one value, the 10% gain to compensate for risk applies to each value (i.e., the clearing area constitutes habitat for three listed species resulting in three values). Therefore, it is assumed Winchelsea Mining will identify a single area that provides habitat for the three listed species considered to be significantly impacted by clearing for the Project (i.e., the Northern Masked Owl, Northern Quoll and Ghost Bat). As such, the risk requirement is anticipated to be an additional 30%. An initial calculation of the anticipated offset is as follows:

- Minimum offset area: total potential loss (545.9) / potential gain (0.2) x net gain requirement (1.2) x risk requirement (1.3) = **4,258.02** ha.
- Calculation of minimum total investment:
 - Threat reduction (10 years): minimum offset area 4,258.02 x threat reduction cost/ha⁵⁹ **\$10** x threat reduction period 10 = **\$425,802**.
 - Threat maintenance (5 years): minimum offset area 4,258.02 x threat maintenance cost/ha⁶⁰ **\$7.5** x threat maintenance period 5 = **\$159,676**.
 - Monitoring: (threat reduction investment **\$425,802** + threat maintenance investment **\$159,676**) x **0.15** = **\$87,822**.
 - Minimum total investment (over 15 years) = threat reduction **\$425,802** + threat maintenance **\$159,676** + monitoring **\$87,822** = **\$673,300**.

⁵⁹ Annual threat reduction costs - dollar cost per hectare, per year of implementing activities to reduce threats to the required benchmarks.

⁶⁰ Annual threat maintenance costs - dollar cost per hectare, per year of implementing activities to maintain threats at the required benchmarks.

As per the Draft Biodiversity Offsets Technical Guidelines (DEPWS, 2022b), the DEPWS are currently assessing landscape scale threat management practices in the NT and cost estimates for a range of activities. At the time of preparing the above estimate, the Guidelines included example values. Winchelsea Mining will update the values to be consistent with the findings of the costing review and final guidelines, once released.

Based on the Draft Biodiversity Offsets Technical Guidelines (DEPWS, 2022b), the minimum time in which the required improvement in habitat condition is likely to occur is 15 years in the monsoonal north biome and the improvement phase may be at least 10 years of that period.

In addition to the direct offsetting, Winchelsea Mining is investigating an added compensatory measure involving a Northern Masked Owl research program inclusive of the known pair on Winchelsea Island and a pair in the northern portion of Groote Eylandt. Both the Northern Territory Offsets Policy and the Commonwealth Government Environmental Offsets Policy (DSEWPC, 2012), provide an option for other compensatory measures including research. As per DSEWPC (2012), the research should improve the viability of the impacted protected matter. Given the general lack of understanding of Northern Masked Owl in the Groote Archipelago, the research would seek to generate data on their feeding habits, how they move about in the environment, confirm nesting locations, determine when may be the least impactful time to remove any nesting trees (noting that they change these periodically), and how they may adapt or be impacted over time. This research would be of direct relevance to the management of the known pair on Winchelsea Island and the species more broadly throughout the Groote Archipelago.

Section 15 References

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