

STATEMENT OF REASONS

Section 69(1)(a) of the *Environment Protection Act 2019* (EP Act)

Environmental approval holder	GROOTE EYLANDT MINING COMPANY PROPRIETARY LIMITED ABN 26 004 618 491
Environmental approval number	EP2025/043-001
Action	GEMCO Excess Water Disposal Project Construct, install and operate water discharge infrastructure (pumps, pipes and marine outfall) over a distance of about 12 km extending to a discharge point 600 m into Milner Bay. The water discharge infrastructure is located on GEMCO Western Leases and is to discharge a maximum of 80 gegalitres (GL) per year to dispose of excess water sourced from mining activity on the Western Leases. The duration of the action is for the remaining life of the Groote Eylandt manganese mine and to support rehabilitation and closure activities.
Material considered	Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority (NT EPA) advice received on 21 August 2026: - Assessment Report 110 - A draft environmental approval setting out recommended conditions. Fit and proper person advice – signed declaration.
Decision	In accordance with sections 69(1)(a) and 82(4)(a) of the EP Act, I accept the draft environmental approval, adopt the proposed conditions of the NT EPA and grant the approval.

REASONS

This Statement of Reasons has been prepared in accordance with sections 82(3) and 82(4) of the EP Act.

Overview of Action

The Groote Eylandt Mining Company Pty Ltd proposes to discharge quarry pit water (also known as mine pit/void water) from the Western Leases active mining area via pipelines from its NH2 Quarry into Milner Bay, adjacent to the existing Port at Groote Eylandt. The action includes:

- two 1-metre nominal diameter (DN1000) terrestrial pipelines running approximately 12,100 m from the NH2 quarry area to the Port, with a 29.5 ha terrestrial disturbance footprint and up to 19.5 ha of vegetation clearing
- a surge control structure located at the top of the foredune receiving flows from both terrestrial pipelines
- a single 1400 mm marine outfall pipeline incorporating a buried de-aeration system in the upper beach zone
- a marine outfall extending approximately 600 m into Milner Bay, with a 2 ha marine disturbance footprint

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- a 145 m, 30-port outfall diffuser (included within the 600 m offshore length)
 - impact piling to install 0.25 m and 0.61 m diameter steel piles along the outfall alignment
 - discharge of up to 80 gegalitres (GL)/year of quarry water via the outfall and diffuser (anticipated to operate at 60 GL pa)
 - infrastructure maintenance works
 - decommissioning and rehabilitation.

The duration of the proposed discharge is for the remaining life of GEMCO mining operations and to support rehabilitation and closure activities.

Environmental context

The proposal is situated on the western coast of Groote Eylandt in the Gulf of Carpentaria, approximately 50 km from the Arnhem Land mainland and around 650 km southeast of Darwin. Groote Eylandt forms part of the Anindilyakwa Indigenous Protected Area, which encompasses approximately 10,000 km² of land and sea across the Groote Archipelago.

The proposal lies within the Groote subregion of the Arnhem Coast bioregion, a coastal and island landscape characterised by eucalypt woodlands, heathlands, mangroves, saline flats, wetlands and floodplain ecosystems. Groote Eylandt is recognised for its high conservation value, supporting important nesting habitat for marine turtles, particularly green and hawksbill turtles, as well as significant seabird populations and a diverse range of native flora and fauna, including several threatened species.

The proposal area occurs within a predominantly low-lying coastal environment, ranging from sea level to approximately 50 m AHD (Australian Height Datum), and is largely vegetated by native eucalypt open forest, woodland and shrubland dominated by Darwin woollybutt and Darwin stringybark.

The proposal is located across multiple land tenures, including:

- GEMCO's Western Leases, which are held under mineral leases granted pursuant to the *Mineral Titles Act 2010* (NT);
- The Rowell Highway (Portion 1305), situated between the northern boundary of the GEMCO Western Lease area and the Port, which is Crown land owned by the Northern Territory Government and covered by mineral lease MLN 956;
- Aboriginal freehold land located outside the Rowell Highway boundary (off-lease areas);
- The Port (Portions 1306 and 1031), which is held by GEMCO under Special Purpose Lease 383 (SPL 383) for specific purposes including ore stockpiling; and
- Milner Bay, which is Crown land gazetted as reserved land under the *Mineral Titles Act 2010*.

Environmental values that require protection from the potential impacts of the action include terrestrial ecosystems, hydrological processes, marine ecosystems, marine environmental quality and culture and heritage. The action should not prevent enhancement of the communities and the economy for the welfare and benefit of current and future generations of Territorians.

Matters considered under section 73 of the EP Act

Section 73(1) Principles of environment protection and management

In considering Part 2 (principles of environment protection and management) of the EP Act, I have considered the meaning of ecologically sustainable development (ESD) and applied each of the principles of ESD. I have reviewed the NT EPA's consideration of the principles of ESD as summarised in its assessment report of the action (Assessment Report 110). I have considered and weighed all the principles of ESD in making my decision.

The NT EPA's assessment process has considered, and I have applied approval conditions, to mitigate environmental impacts associated with construction, operation and decommissioning of the action. The

assessment of the proposal, the NT EPA's advice to me and consequently my decision, has been informed by public and government authority consultation processes.

I have considered and applied the hierarchies for environmental decision-making and waste management. I have given particular consideration to the application of the environmental decision-making hierarchy, and proposed measures to avoid, and then mitigate and manage potential adverse impacts on the environment.

I am satisfied that through compliance with the environmental approval, the action is consistent with the ESD principles and the management hierarchies.

Section 73(1)(a) Objects of the EP Act

I have had regard to the objects of the EP Act. I note in particular that through the environmental impact assessment of the action and the granting of the environmental approval, significant adverse impacts on the Territory environment are likely to be avoided and the protection and management of the Territory environment have been promoted.

The approval of the action will allow construction and operation of the GEMCO Excess Water Disposal Project in the Northern Territory while maintaining environmental protection including protection of terrestrial ecosystems, hydrological processes, marine ecosystems, marine environmental quality and culture and heritage, and allowing ongoing social and economic benefits on Groote Eylandt and to the Territory by maintaining employment opportunities and delivering services to the broader community. I also note the opportunity provided to the stakeholders and the community for involvement in the environmental impact assessment of the action and ongoing for the life of the action.

Section 73(1)(b) Assessment report on the action

I have considered the advice of the NT EPA in Assessment Report 110 which provides the NT EPA's assessment of the potential significant impacts of the action and recommendations for avoiding, mitigating and managing those impacts. The NT EPA identified that the action has the potential to have a significant impact on environmental values, and conditions were recommended for five environmental factors: terrestrial ecosystems, hydrological processes, marine ecosystems, marine environmental quality and culture and heritage. Assessment Report 110 states that the action is likely to meet the NT EPA's environmental objectives and can be implemented and managed in a manner that is environmentally acceptable. The NT EPA recommended an environmental approval be granted subject to implementation of the approval holder's commitments in the referral information and the recommended conditions in the draft environmental approval.

The proposed conditions of the NT EPA have been adopted in the environmental approval.

Section 73(1)(c) Fit and proper person to hold environmental approval

I have had regard to whether the approval holder is a fit and proper person to hold an environmental approval. I consider the approval holder to be a fit and proper person to hold an environmental approval.

Section 73(1)(d) Any other matters the Minister considers relevant

No other relevant matters have been identified.

Section 73(2) of the EP Act

Overall, having regard to the above and the materials I considered, I am satisfied that:

- the community has been consulted on the potential environmental impacts and environmental benefits of the proposed action through public consultation on the referral information and through the NT EPA's assessment of the proponent's consultation undertaken to inform the referral. Noting that ongoing consultation is required with local community stakeholders and relevant stakeholders; and;
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- the significant impacts of the action have been appropriately avoided or mitigated or can be appropriately managed to acceptable levels through compliance with the environmental approval. The NT EPA's Assessment Report 110 supports this view.

No significant residual adverse impacts on the environment were identified that would require an environmental offset.



Signature

Hon Joshua Burgoyne MLA

Minister for Lands, Planning and the Environment

DATE

8 / 9 / 2026
