

5.0 PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

Iron ore was previously mined from Koolanooka and Blue Hills in the late 1960s-early 1970s.

Midwest is currently exporting previously mined material from existing stockpiles at Koolanooka at the rate of 1.0 Mtpa, through the port of Geraldton. An operational workforce of approximately 50 resides in Morawa and Geraldton, providing a significant economic benefit to the region.

The mines are well located, serviced by good quality all weather roads (bitumen and compacted gravel) and close to infrastructure. The town of Morawa is located 21 km to the west and the Port of Geraldton is approximately 160 km from the Koolanooka mine site (Figure 1-1).

The project has been designed to minimise environmental impacts, and utilises pre-disturbed areas wherever possible. Haul roads, waste dumps, ore stockpiles and infrastructure will all be located on previously disturbed land. Open cut access to the haematite ore adjacent to the existing pit at Koolanooka will require only 2.68 ha of additional vegetation to be cleared, although the area is classified as having high conservation value and is part of a TEC. An additional 3.14 ha will be potentially impacted within the dust buffer zone area of influence. Additional pre-disturbed land will also be used, 5.6 ha for plant development and infrastructure and 32.6 ha forming overburden waste dumps.

40.8 ha of proposed conservation reserve vegetation will require clearing at the Blue Hills area and roughly 11.7 ha of previously disturbed land will be converted into pit areas. Additionally, 39.5 ha of regrowth vegetation will require clearing to repair the Mt Karara / Mungada Haul road to a functional state.

Other locations for project infrastructure were not compared for suitability against this proposal, as the works proposed for this Project will be mostly conducted within pre-existing pits and on sites that were previously disturbed. This restricts options to project layout flexibility but reduces further environmental impacts.

If the Project is not developed, the potential impacts listed in Section 8 will not occur, however, the potential social and economic benefits generated for the Midwest District and Morawa, including diversification of employment opportunities at a time of regional drought, will not be realised.



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