



Residents for Responsible Mining

www.r4rm.com

Frequently Asked Questions about bauxite mining in Chittering

1. *Have the bauxite miners left Chittering?*

No. Alpha Bauxite Pty Ltd, a Chinese owned company, purchased Exploration Licences in 2012 over land from Wannamal to the Chittering Valley. As at March 2016 they hold 11 Exploration Licences and have applied for 2 more Exploration Licences. Most of these Licences expire in 2020.

2. *Do the Exploration Licences give Alpha Bauxite the right to explore for bauxite on private property?*

No for 2 reasons.

First: the Exploration Licences only apply to State-owned bauxite on private land that was first granted after 1 January 1899. The majority of the land in the Licence areas was originally granted before 1 January 1899, therefore the bauxite minerals are privately owned and the Licences do not apply to privately owned minerals. Privately owned minerals are managed under Chittering's local Town Planning Laws and those laws do not permit "Industry-Mining" which is any commercial activity involving the extraction of minerals. Therefore landowners and miners cannot explore or mine for bauxite minerals on most of the land in the Shire. This has been the local law in Chittering for many decades.

Second: even if the minerals are State-owned, the holder of an Exploration Licence cannot enter a private property and explore for minerals without the consent of the landowner. The landowner can simply say No, and does not have to give the mining company access to the property.

3. *What is Alpha Bauxite doing?*

Alpha Bauxite has done some bauxite exploration on private property in the past 18 months under its Licences, even though at least one of those properties contains privately owned minerals - this is a breach of Chittering's planning laws by the company and the landowner concerned. Alpha Bauxite says it wants to do more bauxite exploration. However it does not want to investigate the land titles to find out if the bauxite is privately owned (excluded from their Licences) because this means they would be prevented from exploring and mining under our Town Planning laws. We do not know if Alpha Bauxite intends to attempt further bauxite exploration "under the radar" in breach of our Town Planning laws.

4. *What is the Department of Mines & Petroleum's position?*

DMP has done some land title searches in Chittering and has informed Alpha Bauxite that it should assume all land in its Licences in Chittering is pre-1899 land containing privately owned minerals (not State-owned), unless the company can prove otherwise from its land title searches. DMP's position confirms the results of R4RM's own land title searches which showed that of the two thirds of Chittering we searched, the vast majority of the land was originally granted before 1899. Alpha Bauxite's Licences give the company no rights to bauxite on this land.

5. *Where are the two new Exploration Licence Applications?*

In 2015 Alpha Bauxite applied for 2 new Exploration Licences over private land:

1. Immediately to the east and west of Udumung Nature Reserve in Wannamal; and
2. Over 3 farms at the north end of the Chittering Valley, just south of Julimar Road

On behalf of residents, R4RM lodged Objections in the Mining Warden's Court to the grant of these Licences on legal and environmental grounds. So far there have been 3 adjournments at the request of Alpha Bauxite with the next Court Mention hearing on 20 May 2016. In our meeting with Alpha Bauxite, and in writing, their position has been that they do not want the expense and bother of investigating the land titles in their Licence areas. They would like to "suspend" our Town Planning Laws so that they do not apply to them. R4RM has said it would not be acceptable for the company to ignore our planning laws that protect landowners' property rights, land values and amenity.

6. *Is there any chance bauxite mining could occur in Chittering?*

According to experienced bauxite miners and mining industry experts, there is very little chance that bauxite mining could occur in Chittering.

Apart from most of the bauxite being privately owned, Chittering bauxite is generally low value, low quality and is scattered very widely in deposits throughout the Shire (which is why several large companies abandoned the area in the 1970s). Bauxite mining is a very large scale operation that involves digging up millions of tonnes of soil and rocks in the top 12 metres of hilltops and hillsides, and shipping it out. It is a strip-mining process that involves large scale land-clearing and excavation and very high water usage. There are major legal, environmental, economic and social obstacles to bauxite mining starting in Chittering and few benefits (if any) – for example, there would be very few jobs created by it but it would result in a very significant loss in land values and amenity, a decline in agricultural, tourism and lifestyle investment and major risks to our water resources and clean air.

Despite what the experts say, as long as a bauxite company holds Exploration Licences over land in Chittering, there is a risk that our local laws may be ignored or undermined.

7. *What will happen to Alpha Bauxite's Exploration Licences?*

The Exploration Licences are a legacy of the recent mining boom when numerous West Australian snake-oil salesman pegged old uneconomic mineral deposits and sold failed ideas to China. Unfortunately, now these Licences exist, it may take many years before Chinese miners stop trying to dig up Chittering. Unfortunately this creates uncertainty for everyone.

Alpha Bauxite may continue to pay rent on the Exploration Licences in the hope that it gives them some strategic right to the bauxite. Many of the Licences expire in 2020. R4RM will continue its Objections to the 2 new Licence Applications. R4RM will also continue to try to persuade Alpha Bauxite to withdraw from Chittering and forfeit its Licences.

8. *What can residents do to prevent bauxite mining in Chittering?*

- Talk to your neighbours, make sure you know what is happening on the properties in your area and what your neighbours' attitude is to bauxite mining
- Tell your local MP (Shane Love) and Shire Councillors that you do not support bauxite mining and would like the State and the Shire to actively protect ratepayers interests and uphold local laws
- Report any mineral drilling or bulldozing activity to the Shire and ask them to investigate if the relevant land is subject to local laws (pre-1899 grant)
- Report any mineral drilling or bulldozing activity, or any approach from Alpha Bauxite, to R4RM at r4rmbindoon@gmail.com