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Department of Planning and Environment 4 Parramatta Square, 12 Darcy Street, Parramatta NSW 2150

Attention: Katrina O'Reilly, Team Leader - Compliance

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Dear Katrina.

## RE: COWAL GOLD OPERATIONS INDEPENDENT ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT – PROPONENT'S RESPONSE AND CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN

In accordance with the Independent Audit Post Approval Requirements (2020), the final Independent Environmental Audit Report and the proponent's response to audit findings must be submitted to the Department within two months of undertaking the independent audit site inspection, unless otherwise agreed by the Department.

In this regard, please be advised that the triennial Cowal Gold Operations (CGO) Independent Environmental Audit (IEA) 2022 was undertaken by Environmental Resources Management (ERM) for the audit period of 1 May 2019 to 13 April 2022.

A copy of the 2022 IEA report is provided in Attachment 1.

The findings of the IEA consisted of ten non-compliances, two opportunities for improvement and six recommendations made against compliant conditions. It is noted that non-compliances identified during the audit do not pose immediate risk to the environment and are generally administrative in nature. Findings requiring immediate action have been entered into the INX - InControl management system as an audit action, with corrective actions agreed to by the CGO Sustainability Manager and responsibility appointed with a required completion date.

A proponent's response to the identified non-compliances, recommendations, and opportunities for improvement identified in the final IEA report, and a proposed timeframe for implementation where relevant, is provided in **Attachment 2**.

Please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned or Simon Coates (Superintendent - Environment; 0437 371 886) should you wish to discuss further.

Yours sincerely, Evolution Mining (Cowal) Pty Limited

John Penhall
General Manager
Cowal Gold Operations

## **ATTACHMENT 1**

INDEPENDENT ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT REPORT (ERM 2022)

## ATTACHMENT 2 PROPONENT'S RESPONSE AND CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN

Table 1: Proponent's Response and Corrective Action Plan - Non-Compliances

Condition Number (ID)	Compliance Requirement		Independent Audit Finding	Independent Audit Recommendati on	Proposed Action/Action taken/Response	Proposed Action Due Date
DA 14/98 Condition 1.2d	Unless the Planning Secretary ag comply with the operating hours in Table 1.1: Operating hours	rees otherwise, the Applicant must n Table 1.1.	Non-compliant  Evolution Mining notified DPIE on 15 October 2021 of a Non-Compliance due to an incursion from the Northern Waste Rock	Historic NC. No further action required.	-	Complete
	Activity	Hours	Emplacement Site soil stockpiles (a 24/7 operation) into the IWL area out of IWL operating hours (7am – 6pm, 7 days a week).			
	Construction of Tailings Storage Facility lifts or rock buttress	7 am to 6 pm, 7 days a week	Due to delays caused by wet weather and other causes, approval was sought to extend the IWL operating hours to 24/7, DPIE			
	Supplementary IWL activities		approval of which was received 7 February 2022.			
	Construction of Lake Cowal water supply pipeline (excluding construction at the western side of Lake Cowal)	7 am to 6 pm, Monday to Friday 8 am to 1 pm, Saturday	The auditor was informed that works on the site are primarily undertaken internally by Evolution Mining, resulting in full control of			
	Lake Cowal Road realignment construction	No activities on Sundays or public holidays				
	All other activities	24 hours a day, 7 days a week				
DA 14/98 Condition 2.4c	mining lease(s) associated with the Act 1992. The plan must:	with the conditions imposed on the ne development under the Mining of the site would be integrated with	Non-compliant  Most of the requirements in this condition are addressed in both the Rehabilitation Management Plan (Sept 2017) and the Mine Operation Management Plan (1 Sept 2021 – 2 July 2022), except for:  (ii) include geotechnical analysis and review of ongoing open pit development, the management of the integrated waste and	Update the Rehabilitation Management Plan to address all of the requirements in this condition.	Evolution Mining acknowledges the new requirement, introduced through MOD 16, granted 30 September 2021. A review of the Rehabilitation Management Plan is currently underway in accordance with the	July 2022

	<ul> <li>(ii) include geotechnical analysis and review of ongoing open pit development, the management of the integrated waste and continued monitoring of the lake protection bund;</li> <li>(iii) include detailed performance and completion criteria for evaluating the performance of the rehabilitation of the site, and triggering remedial action (if necessary);</li> <li>(iv) describe the measures that would be implemented to ensure compliance with the relevant conditions of this consent, and address all aspects of rehabilitation including mine closure, final landform (including final voids) and final land use;</li> <li>(v) include a program to monitor, and report on the effectiveness of the measures, and progress against the detailed performance and completion criteria; and</li> <li>(vi) build to the maximum extent practicable on the other management plans required under this consent.</li> <li>Note: The Rehabilitation Management Plan may be combined with a Mining Operations Plan, or similar plan, required under the mining lease granted for the development.</li> </ul>	continued monitoring of the lake protection bund; No such analyses and descriptions are provided in either plan.		requirements of the NSW Rehabilitation Reforms. Evolution will ensure that the update addresses all requirements outlined in this condition.	
DA 14/98 Condition 3.1a	The Applicant shall:  (i) prepare and implement a Heritage Management Plan for the development to the satisfaction of the Planning Secretary. The plan shall be prepared in consultation with Bland District Historical Society, BSC, and Lake Cowal landholders/residents and address non-indigenous cultural heritage issues associated with the development;  (ii) prepare and implement an Indigenous Archaeology and Cultural Management Plan for the development to the satisfaction of the Planning Secretary. The plan shall be prepared in consultation with Heritage NSW, the Local Aboriginal Land Council, a consultant archaeologist, any other stakeholders identified by Heritage NSW; include a Chance Finds Protocol and identify future salvage, excavation and monitoring of any archaeological sites within the site prior to and during development, and to address Aboriginal cultural heritage issues; and	Non-compliant  As per the previous IEA, both the Heritage Management Plan (2003) and the Indigenous Archaeology and Cultural Management Plan (2003) are based on out-of-date conditions. It also needs to be updated with respect to the mine owner's name and departmental names.	Heritage Management Plan and Indigenous Archaeology and Cultural Management Plan to be updated to align with current conditions and name changes.	Evolution Mining have reviewed the relevant management plans and confirmed no material changes to the contents and requirements. However, an administrative update is currently underway in accordance with DA 14/98 (MOD 16) and SSD 10367. Evolution will ensure that the updates address the requirements outlined in this condition.	Submitted Via Portal

		icer approved by the West Wyalong ho is to be available on site during				
DA 14/98 Condition 3.4a	The Applicant shall implement the summarised in Table 2, shown of described in detail in the EIS to the Secretary.  Table 2: Northern and Southern  Area  Northern Offset Area (Enhancement Area)  Southern Offset Area (Enhancement Area) (including 230 ha Mod 11 extension)  Southern Offset Area (Revegetation Area)	onceptually in Appendix 3, and the satisfaction of the Planning	Non-compliant  The Biodiversity Offset Strategy is contained within the Biodiversity Management Plan. The area requirements outlined in Table 1 of this plan for each of the three offset areas are at variance with the equivalent area requirements of the current condition, although the total area required for offsets is identical (440ha).  The mine owner's name and departmental names will also need to be updated.	The Biodiversity Offset Management Plan to be updated to reflect current offset area requirements, owner's name, and departmental names.	Evolution Mining have reviewed the Biodiversity Management Plan and confirmed no material changes to the contents and requirements. However, an administrative update is currently underway in accordance with DA 14/98 (MOD 16) and SSD 10367. Evolution will ensure that the update addresses the requirements outlined in this condition.	July 2022
	Total	440 ha				
DA 14/98 Condition 4.4a	Gold Operations to the satisfaction plan must:  a. be prepared by a suitably qua	later Management Plan for the Cowa on of the Planning Secretary. This lified and experienced person/s adorsed by the Planning Secretary;	Table 1 in the Water Management Plan provides information on compliance of this Plan with this Condition. No information is provided neither in this table nor elsewhere whether this Plan was prepared in the manner as per this requirement.  This Plan was conditionally approved by the DPIE in correspondence to Evolution Mining 15 April 2022.	Future updates of this Plan to specify author qualifications and experience.	The Water Management was conditionally approved by DPE on 15 April 2022. The Plan was resubmitted on 20 May 2022 in accordance with the conditional approval. However, Evolution Mining will seek explicit approval and endorsement of the authors in accordance with this condition.	July 2022
SSD Condition B9a	As above		As above	As above	As above	As above

DA 14/98 Condition 5.3a	componen CNWAD/L	t of the tai (90 perce	ensure that c lings slurry s ntile over six ole limit at ar	stream do no c months), a	ot exceed: 20 nd 30mg CN	)mg IWAD/L	Non-compliant  CNWAD/L levels exceeded the 20mg level on two occasions, including 13 February 2020 (notification C02325-2020) and 7 July 2021 (notification REF-NO-3899). Close-out schedules as documented in the Incident Investigation reports were completed prior to the audit.  While the 2021 Annual Review and published Environmental Monitoring document report on the 2021 incident, no mention is made of the 2020 incident in the same 2020 documents.	Historic NC – no further action required. Ensure all non-compliances are documented in Annual Reviews	Evolution Mining maintains a proactive reporting culture and has reported all historic cyanide exceedances at the time of the incident. However, an administrative oversight contributed to this omission in 2020. Evolution will ensure all non-compliances are documented in future Annual Reviews and EPL Published Monitoring Data, as demonstrated throughout the 2021 reporting period.	March 2022
EPL 11912	Water and/or Land Concentration Limits			Non-compliant	As above	As above	As above			
L2.4	POINT 48						As above			
	Pollutant	Unit of measur e	50 percentile concentrat ion limit	90 percentile concentrat ion limit	3DGM concentrat ion limit	100 percentile concentrat ion limit				
	Cyanide (weak acid dissocia ble)	milligra ms per litre		20		30				
DA 14/98 Condition 9.1c	Within 3 m (i) the subr (ii) the subr condition 9 (iii) the subr	onths of: mission of mission of 0.3(a) or 9. omission o	es, Plans and an annual ref f a non-comp .3(b) below; f an audit ur ny modificat	eview under pliance or induder	cident notific n 9.2 (a) bel	ation under ow;	Non-compliant  No specific register is currently maintained by Evolution Mining to support the review timeframe as specified in this requirement. However, the E&S Superintendent advised the auditor that the mine site has moved from the InForm system, which enables notification to individuals (in isolation) about	Register to be created to track, plan reviews.	Whilst strategies, plans and programs are continuously reviewed, Evolution Mining is currently implementing an auditable document management system to track revisions in	July 2022

	(v) a direction of the Planning Secretary under condition 1.1(b) of this consent; the suitability of existing strategies, plans and programs required under this consent must be reviewed by the Applicant. If necessary, to either improve the environmental performance of the development or cater for a modification or comply with a direction, the strategies, plans and programs required under this consent must be revised, to the satisfaction of the Planning Secretary. Where revisions are required, the revised document must be submitted to the Planning Secretary for approval within six weeks of the review. Note: This is to ensure the strategies, plans and programs are updated on a regular basis, and incorporate any recommended measures to improve the environmental performance of the development.	tasks to be completed with respect to the obligations register, to the InControl system, which provides notification to management resulting in greater oversight, thereby assisting in ensuring that tasks are completed on time.		accordance with Condition 9.1c	
SSD Condition B21	The Applicant must:  (e) monitor and report on the effectiveness of the waste minimisation and management measures in the Annual Review referred to in condition C9.	Non-compliant  The auditor reviewed the 2021 Annual Review: No report on the effectiveness of the waste minimisation and management measures could be found.	Future Annual Review should report on waste minimisation measures	Evolution Mining acknowledges the new requirement, introduced through SSD 10367, granted 30 September 2021. Evolution will ensure future Annual Reviews report on waste minimisation measures	March 2023

Table 2: Proponent's Response and Corrective Action Plan – Recommendations and Opportunities for Improvement

Condition Number (ID)	Compliance Requirement	Independent Audit Finding	Independent Audit Recommendatio	Proposed Action/Action taken/Response	Proposed Action Due Date
NA	NA NA	Opportunity for Improvement  A range of opportunities for improvement are provided by the 2019-2021 Annual Reviews. For example, the 2021 Annual Review reports on key recommendations provided by the Annual Air Quality Monitoring Review – 2021 (Zephyr Environmental 2022) are summarised as follows:  Retain the continuous PM10 monitoring at the HVAS site to enable comparison of datasets.  Implement PM2.5 monitoring co-located with the TSP HVAS and continuous PM10, prior to the commencement of UG mining production.  Rationalise the dust deposition gauge network, reducing it to four gauges at locations DG01, DG09, DG14 and McLintocks Shed.	n -	Evolution Mining is committed to continuous improvement of business practices and will review the identified opportunities contained within the Annual Reviews to be implemented as required at CGO.	December 2022
NA	NA NA	Other opportunities for improvement are provided by in the Rehabilitation sections of the Annual Reviews. As noted in Section Error! Reference source not found. above, there are findings resulting from the rehabilitation trials that should be applied to both previously rehabilitated and newly rehabilitated surfaces in order to establish a self-sustaining ecosystem corresponding with rehabilitation objectives and the nominated post-mining land use for the site.	-	Evolution Mining will review the opportunities for improvement provided in the Rehabilitation sections of the Annual Reviews and historic findings resulting from the rehabilitation trials to be implemented as required at CGO.	December 2022
DA 14/98 Condition 2.4a	Rehabilitation Objectives The Applicant must rehabilitate the site in accordance with the conditions imposed on the	Compliant	Oversow or plant shrubs and trees species within	Evolution Mining will review and consider all IEA findings when	July 2022

mining leases(s) associated with the development under the Mining	Rehabilitation objectives of Table 1 of these	rehabilitated areas	preparing the FY23-	
Act 1992. The	conditions are in accordance with Table 9 of	currently primarily	FY25 rehabilitation	
rehabilitation must be generally consistent with the proposed	the 2021-2022 MOP. DA1498-Mod-	containing ground	program forecast.	
rehabilitation objectives	Conditions Appendix 3 conforms with Figure	cover to improve		
described in the EIS (and shown conceptually in the figure in	4C (Final Landform and Land Use) of the	ecosystem		
Appendix 3), as amended by	2021-2022 MOP. DRG approved the MOP in	functioning and		
the approved rehabilitation strategy (see condition 3.8) and must	October 2021.	establishment of		
comply with the objectives	According to the 2021 Annual Review,	selfsustaining		
in Table 1.	109.6ha of land is under active rehabilitation	ecosystem.		
	(up from 46ha in 2020), with an additional			
Table 1: Rehabilitation objectives	12ha being prepared for rehabilitation.	Install coarse		
		woody debris to		
	Results of rehabilitation monitoring are	increase micro		
	provided in the Annual Reviews. The 2021	habitats and		
	Annual Review notes that stability and the	improve wildlife		
	provision of micro habitats through	habitat within		
	application of leaf litter and rocks is important	rehabilitated		
	for germination. Trials were undertaken using	areas.		
	different growth media, seeding and planting			
	applications.			
	During the site visit, the auditor observed that			
	rehabilitated areas contained good			
	vegetation cover, without evidence of			
	significant erosion in the areas visited.			

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	Feature	Objective					
	Mine site (as a whole)	<ul> <li>Safe, stable and non-polluting</li> <li>Final landforms designed to incorporate microrelief and integrate with surrounding natural landforms</li> <li>Constructed landforms are to generally drain to the final void</li> <li>Minimise long term groundwater seepage zones</li> <li>Minimise visual impact of final landforms as far as is reasonable and feasible</li> </ul>					
	Final void	Minimise to the greatest extent practicable:  the size and depth of final void  the drainage catchment of final void  risk of flood interaction for all flood events up to and including the Probable Maximum Flood  To be permanently separated from Lake Cowal by the Lake Protection Bund  Highwall to be long-term stable  Minimise the ongoing runoff from clean areas into the final void					
	Surface infrastructure	- To be decommissioned and removed, unless Resources Regulator agrees otherwise					
	Agriculture	- Restore or maintain land capability generally as described in the EIS					
	Rehabilitation areas and other vegetated land	Restore ecosystem function, including maintaining or establishing self-sustaining ecosystems					
	Community	Ensure public safety     Minimise adverse socio-economic effects     associated with mine closure					
DA 14/98 Condition 3.2b	Management Pla Planning Secreta	all prepare and implement a Flora and Fauna n for the development to the satisfaction of the ry. The plan shall be prepared in consultation with d BCS, and cover the mining lease area and	Compliant  The auditor reviewed the Flora and Fauna Management Plan: It addresses all of the requirements of this condition, although the	Flora and Fauna Management Plan to be updated with recent name changes.	Evolution Mining have reviewed Flora and Fauna Management Plan and confirmed no material changes	July 2022	

	monitoring of bird breeding areas as identified by the Applicant in consultation with BCS. The plan shall include, but not be limited to: (i) methods for monitoring daily and seasonal fauna usage of tailings dams and IWL (eg. species, number, location, habits), and whether deaths or other effects or incidents are occurring. Usage of the tailings dams and IWL shall be reported to the BCS on a six monthly basis, unless otherwise directed by the Planning Secretary; (ii) development of a protocol for the reporting of any cyanide related native fauna deaths on the mining lease to the BCS, DRE, Resources Regulator, CEMCC and in the case of fish, DPI Fisheries. Cyanide related native fauna deaths must be reported as per this protocol within 24 hours (or next working day) following confirmation of the death being cyanide related. The Applicant shall maintain a record of cyanide related native fauna deaths this record must be published in the Annual Review and annually on the Applicant's website for the development;	departments and other authority names will need to be updated due to recent name changes of these entities.  The auditor verified that Six Monthly Fauna Usage of Tailings Dams Reports were prepared and submitted.  The auditor noted that no cyanide related fauna deaths were found on the incidence register and none were recorded in the Annual Reviews.  The auditor inspected the site's fauna care facilities and carcass fridges as holding facilities prior to transport to veterinary laboratory.  The auditor observed high fencing with lower fine mesh surrounding the mine site designed to keep wildlife out of the IWL area.  The auditor reviewed a range of fauna monitoring reports, including for waterbirds, weeds, and fish.		to the contents and requirements. However, an administrative update is currently underway in accordance with DA 14/98 (MOD 16) and SSD 10367. Evolution will ensure that the update addresses the requirements outlined in this condition.	
DA 14/98 Condition 3.3	The Applicant shall prepare and implement a Compensatory Wetland Management Plan for the development to the satisfaction of the Planning Secretary. The plan shall be prepared in consultation with BCS and DPI Fisheries, Lake Cowal Landowners Association, and Lake Cowal Environmental Trust, and detail compensation measures for the loss of 120 hectares of wetland, through the enhancement of at least the equivalent area of existing wetland within the mine lease area during operation and following closure of the mine. The plan shall include, but not be limited to:	Compliant  A review of the Compensatory Wetland Management Plan by the auditor indicates that while the Plan addresses the requirements of this condition, it will need to be updated with respect to owner's name, and departmental name changes.	The Compensatory Wetland Management Plan to be updated to align with current departmental name changes.	Evolution Mining have reviewed Compensatory Wetland Management Plan and confirmed no material changes to the contents and requirements. However, an administrative update is currently underway in accordance with DA 14/98 (MOD 16) and SSD 10367. Evolution will ensure that the update addresses the requirements outlined in this condition.	July 2022

DA 14/98 Condition 3.5	a soil stripping management plan for the site which shall include, but not be limited to: (i) details of the management of soil stockpiles, soil stripping techniques and scheduling; (ii) any further requirements of Resources Regulator; and (iii) a program for reporting on the effectiveness of the soil stripping methods and performance against objectives contained in the soil stripping management plan, and EIS.	Compliant  The 2016 version of the Soil Stripping Management Plan still refers to Barrick as the owner. While the statutory requirements addressed in this Plan are as per current conditions, departmental names need to be updated.  Annual Reviews note that areas for soil stripping were minimised to reduce soil exposure, and limited to areas required for future mining operations.	Soil Stripping Management Plan to be updated with current owner and departmental names	A revised Soil Stripping Management Plan was submitted for approval on 30 March 2022.	Pending approval
DA 14/98 Condition 5.4d	Transport of Hazardous Materials The Applicant must prepare and implement a Hazardous Materials Management Plan for the development to the satisfaction of the Planning Secretary. This plan must: (i) be prepared in consultation with Forbes, Bland and Lachlan councils, TfNSW, EPA, DPIE Water and Resources Regulator; (ii) be consistent with the International Cyanide Management Code for the Manufacture, Transport and Use of Cyanide in the Production of Gold; and (iii) describe the measures that would be implemented to ensure: • sodium cyanide and other toxic chemicals are stored and handled on the site in accordance with AS/NZ 4452 – The Storage and Handling of Toxic Substances; • the transportation of hazardous materials to or from the site on the local road network shown in Appendix 7 is undertaken in accordance with the Department's Hazardous Industry Planning Advisory Paper No. 11 – Route Selection and the Australian Code for the Transport of Dangerous Goods by Road and Rail – current version; and • detail the emergency procedures for the development consistent with the Department's Hazardous Industry Planning Advisory Paper No. 1 – Emergency Planning. The Applicant must implement the approved Hazardous Materials Management Plan for the development. Note: The approved Hazardous Materials Management Plan plan shall replace the pre-commissioning studies required by conditions 5.4(b)(i) and (ii) and the Hazardous Waste and Chemical Management Plan required by condition 5.7 of Schedule 2 of this consent.	Compliant  A review of the Hazardous Materials Management Plan by the auditor indicates that while the Plan addresses the requirements of this condition, it will need to be updated with current departmental names.	The Hazardous Materials Management Plan needs to be updated with current departmental names.	A revised Hazardous Materials Management Plan was submitted for approval on 17 March 2022.	Pending approval

DA 14/98	Air Quality Management Plan	Compliant	The Air Quality	A revised Air Quality	Pending
Condition	The Applicant shall prepare and implement an Air Quality	Compilant	Management Plan	Management Plan	approval
6.1c	Management Plan for the Cowal Gold Operations to the satisfaction of the Planning Secretary. This plan must:  (i) be prepared in consultation with the EPA;	The Air Quality Management Plan should be updated to include updated names of mine owner.	should be updated to include updated names of mine	was submitted for approval on 3 March 2022.	
	(ii) describe the measures that would be implemented to ensure compliance with the relevant air quality criteria and operating	All of the requirements in this condition are addressed by this Plan.	owner and departmental		
	conditions of this consent:	,	names.		
	(iii) include an air quality monitoring program that:				
	evaluates and reports on the:				
	the effectiveness of the air quality management system;				
	compliance with the air quality criteria;				
	compliance with the air quality operating conditions; and				
	defines what constitutes an air quality incident, and includes a				
	protocol for identifying and notifying the Department and relevant				
	stakeholders of any air quality incidents.				