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Government should follow due process on mine

Bauxite mining plans will not harm Cape York's natural values or the Wenlock River, writes **Paul Messenger**

THE Queensland Government should ignore the latest political stunt by the Wilderness Society and Australia Zoo and declare, once again, its commitment to due process.

These organisations have sought to draw fresh attention to a long-running email and petition campaign and are encouraging people to call Premier Anna Bligh to pressure the Government into subverting due process.

The Government has already rejected a petition urging it to stop Cape Alumina's \$400 million Pisolite Hills bauxite mine and port project on Cape York from going ahead, and should also reject this one.

Cape Alumina expects the State Government will reaffirm its commitment to due process so that the company can finalise its Environmental Impact Statement to prove that a balance between responsible mining, economic development and protection of the natural values of western Cape York – where bauxite mining has been going on for more than 50 years – can be achieved.

The Government should also not delay its pending decision on whether to declare the Wenlock River Basin in western Cape York as a wild river area, under its Wild Rivers legislation.

Cape Alumina has been developing its Pisolite Hills mine and port project for a number of years and has a vested interest in this proposed declaration.

The company acknowledges that the Wenlock River catchment contains some areas of natural environmental values that are worthy of protection and protecting the natural environment is an integral part of our approach to business.

However, the need to protect the environment and the creation of so-called High Preservation Areas must

be supported by sound scientific assessment, and science should not become subservient to a politically motivated environmental agenda.

Development of Cape Alumina's proposed project can help the Bligh Government meet its 100,000 new jobs target, but only if the right balance is struck between responsible mining, economic development and protection of the Wenlock River Basin's natural values.

The Pisolite Hills project will create approximately 500 jobs during construction and another 250 permanent, full-time jobs during the 15-year life of the mine and promises to generate billions of dollars in export revenue from bauxite sales and hundreds of millions of dollars in state and Commonwealth government royalties and taxes.

We believe the findings of our soon-to-be released EIS will allay fears about the potential impact on the environment – fears often founded on misinformation.

Our mining activities will take place between 2.8km and 15km away from the Wenlock River and well away from any major tributaries.

The proposed mining area is stringybark country on which cattle have grazed for more than 100 years.

Cape Alumina has no plans to mine any wetlands, rivers, springs or areas of high conservation value and the Wenlock River will be fully protected under our operational and environmental management plans.

Cape Alumina believes due process should be followed and if that is the case, the EIS will demonstrate it is possible to achieve a balance between responsible and sustainable economic development and environmental protection of the Cape York region.

Dr Paul Messenger is managing director of Cape Alumina Ltd.