



## Biodiversity and heritage protection at Tropicana

Work began on the Tropicana Joint Venture Exploration Program with partner Independence Group NL. in 2002. The project area is located on the edge of the Great Victoria Desert 330km east north-east of Kalgoorlie and 230km east of Laverton in Western Australia. The tenement package covers 12,500km<sup>2</sup> and is situated across three bio-geographical regions.

At an early stage of the project it was recognised that the tenement package held by the joint venture had a rich diversity of plant and animal species and a number of vegetation communities of interest, some of which are considered significant and are protected under state and federal legislation. It was also recognised that the region lacked detailed heritage information that could be used to develop management practices throughout the JV tenement.

To address this, the company developed a three-stage approach for identifying and managing the environmental and heritage value.

The first stage involved collecting information from relevant state and federal government departments on known values for the region. The key finding of this desktop study was that the sand dune vegetation communities were of particular significance, containing several

threatened flora and fauna species and that virtually no work had been done on heritage sites. This information was included in AngloGold Ashanti Australia's geographic information system (GIS) to signal environmental constraints thereby enabling the exploration team to avoid impacts within the tenement package.

Stage two involved a combination of desktop surveys and targeted field surveys by specialist consultants to identify any threatened species and significant heritage sites in or adjacent to areas planned to be cleared for exploration activities. Local indigenous communities were consulted to ensure that any known ethnographic sites within the proposed exploration area were also identified and protected. Although no ethnographic sites were recorded, a number of archaeological sites were identified across the tenement area.

A threatened flora and fauna species education programme, including the development of a rare flora handbook for use in the field, has been compiled for the project area. As part of the induction programme, the handbook is used to ensure that all employees and contractors are aware of the known significant species occurring within the region. In 2008 the handbook will be expanded to include threatened fauna and heritage sites.

Stage three, which is still underway, involves systematic flora, fauna and archaeological surveys across the potential mining areas to identify and protect environmental and heritage values within the potential mining footprints. To date, the Tropicana Joint Venture has commissioned the following systematic surveys of the area, surrounding the potential Tropicana/Havana project:

- vegetation community and flora survey;
- archaeological and ethnographical survey;
- vertebrate fauna survey;
- short-range endemic invertebrate survey;
- subterranean fauna surveys; and
- systematic threatened flora and fauna surveys anticipated to occur within the Tropicana/Havana operational area.

The surveys identified several populations of threatened flora and fauna species, a number of new flora species within the region and significant range extensions for a number of other species. This information is incorporated into the Tropicana current work practices and informs the joint venture's planning, thereby avoiding and minimising impacts on threatened species. The information is also provided to government for inclusion in existing state-wide natural and archaeological/heritage databases thus contributing to and expanding the knowledge of this poorly known region.

Additional studies and monitoring will be conducted throughout the life of the project. The information obtained will be used to establish appropriate policies, procedures and management plans for exploration activities and future mine construction and operation to ensure that biodiversity and heritage values within the project area are protected and any potential impacts are minimised.