

ANDREW LEES TRUST (ALT UK) ADVOCACY STATEMENT 8th JUNE 2022



Following recent events in Anosy, this statement aims to provide additional clarification about the advocacy work of the Andrew Lees Trust (ALT UK) in relation to the Rio Tinto/QMM mine issues.

ALT UK is a UK based NGO principally concerned with supporting civil society in order to promote a more equitable world. See: <http://www.andrewleestrust.org/>

- a) We do not support violence, or any actions that could lead to violence and people getting hurt
- b) We are a British charity and hence we are not and cannot be involved in any activity of a political nature
- c) Our primary objective in the *advocacy work* around the Rio Tinto/QMM water issues is to
 - amplify the concerns, needs and voice of local people
 - promote human rights of local communities to a safe environment, to information, free speech etc
 - hold a British registered (Anglo-Australian) corporation to account for actions in Madagascar that may cause harm to Malagasy citizens and their environment

ALT UK is not, and cannot be involved in a *pro or anti QMM conflict*. Rather, since the QMM mine began operating, the Trust has rejected the for-or-against narrative because it undermines dialogue, is divisive, a distraction from the main issues, and risks to subvert any process that might equitably address technical and social matters arising. It has largely been in QMM's interests to divide people along these lines and/or to characterise people or groups in this way, all of which has undermined resolving legitimate interests and claims over many years.

We support and promote rights to freedom of speech, and our track record in Madagascar demonstrates our commitment to promoting democratic dialogue.

We would welcome a national commission that affords the opportunity for QMM issues to be transparently aired and reviewed, and space for an additional, independent advisory process to the Government on mining impacts.

We support Swanson's recommendations - e.g., in her 2022 Memo '[Near-term actions](#)' for additional testing following dam failures and [dead fish](#), and which the government (perhaps in partnership with international bodies such as the WHO, UN) can execute to the highest international standards, using external laboratories and a fully transparent process. We also believe it is what local people want - and why they demand tests are undertaken and results shared.

The Trust continues to serve the people of southern Madagascar and would welcome the opportunity to play a constructive role in supporting a resolution process on the QMM water issues, where at all possible. That said, there are limits to our capacity as a small NGO, including but not exclusively:

- a) ALT UK is not set up as an advisory body on water, hydrology or radioactivity and cannot *offer services or advice* on such topics. We can participate in dialogue, provide relevant technical data/ information in our possession, explain our research in relation to the mining project based on our knowledge and experience, support civil society, communicate lobby and raise issues - especially those concerning the rights of citizens.
- b) We have been dependent on external experts in hydrology and radioactivity to provide their respective research and analysis skills on QMM. We have no funds to support further studies, and any future activity or advice that the experts may decide to offer (or we may request) will be entirely premised on goodwill.
- c) ALT UK has been portrayed as "anti QMM" not just by the mining company but also by those who do not agree with the contestation on the water issues. This means that the independent experts' studies risk, unfairly, to be perceived as 'biased'. We say *unfairly* because neither they nor ALT UK gains anything from the outcome, except perhaps the satisfaction of seeing Malagasy citizens' rights upheld. In contrast, Rio Tinto has financial interests at play. This is something we wish to highlight, because [Eberman's and Swanson's studies](#) deserve to be accepted and reviewed according to their merit and independent status.

Internationally we will continue to pressure Rio Tinto to abide by its international commitments on human rights, the environment and sustainable development. In this advocacy work, the Trust continues to work in partnership with Publish What You Pay ([PWYP](#)) Madagascar and is grateful for collaboration with a number of international actors and organisations concerned with water quality, environment, human rights, social justice and the impacts of mining on indigenous communities.

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