

# The West Australian

Newmont's for-sale Telfer gold mine in the Pilbara has halted production since April over tailings 'seepage'



**Adrian Rauso** The West Australian  
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 The Telfer mine in Western Australia. Credit: Lynton Crabb/TheWest

Production at one of Australia's largest gold mines has been put on ice for the second time in less than six months due to a crippled tailings dam.

A Newmont spokesman told The West Australian that milling activities were suspended at the historic Telfer mine in the East Pilbara following "detection of seepage" from a section of the wall at one of its tailings storage facilities (TSF 7) on April 14.

A tailings storage facility is used to deposit and store mining waste.

"Mining at Telfer is continuing with the ore being stockpiled," a Newmont spokesman said on Monday.

There was no timeframe provided for an expected restart.

WorkSafe chief inspector of mines Tony Robertson said it had issued Newmont with two prohibition notices for TSF 7 and TSF 8 at Telfer.

“WorkSafe will lift the prohibition notices once the company meets the required directions ... WorkSafe remains in regular contact with the Telfer mine site regarding the prohibition notices,” he said.

The US behemoth previously shut the mill on Christmas Eve due to “cracking and seepage” on an internal embankment between TSF 7 and TSF 8, before restarting full operations in mid-February.

This means Newmont, the world’s largest gold producer, was forced to stop churning through the ore at Telfer for seven weeks.

“Following initial detection of cracking, Telfer activated its emergency response plan including closure of some work areas near the tailings storage facilities while analysis and monitoring was undertaken using radar and drone technology,” a Newmont spokesman said in January.

At that time Premier Roger Cook weighed in on the issue, stating it was “a very concerning development”.

“We expect Newmont to be able to ensure that their facility operates safely and with all the environmental conditions in mind. So we expect them to be able to address that issue,” he said.

Telfer was switched on in 1977 and has had eight tailings storage facilities over its life but only two currently in operation - TSF 7 and TSF8 – with TSF 8 built in 2021.

The West Australian understands aggressive soil erosion on the embankment has destabilised both TSF 7 and TSF 8.

Telfer – which produced nearly 349,000 ounces of gold last financial year – was under the control of Newcrest until Newmont bought out the gold major for \$26 billion in October.

Newmont in February flagged its intention to offload a suite of projects across the globe, including Telfer, to generate about \$3b.

In WA the company also operates the massive Boddington gold mine, about 120km south-east of Perth, which it has poured in more than \$2b to expand.