

Submission to the Inquiry into Impediments to Resource Exploration

This submission only addresses the aspect of the provision of geoscientific data to the exploration industry by the various geological surveys.

Considering the extensive areas of land that exist in Australia the various geological surveys have done a reasonable job of carrying out the geological mapping of the various states at a scale of 1:250,000. This has progressed from an initial first pass phase to a remapping and upgrading phase together with the provision of more detailed geological maps at 1:100,000 scale.

This geological information is basic data on which exploration planning is undertaken and day to day work is based. It has traditionally been supplied as colour prints on paper which, in Western Australia currently sell for \$10.00 per map sheet or \$15.00 with notes. Digital versions of the maps that are becoming available in WA at a cost of \$50 per disc per map sheet. These discs do not contain a copy of the notes or any other data. I believe that in the Northern Territory and Victoria these discs are supplied free of charge and the price in WA appears hard to justify. The discs from Victoria also contain considerable additional data such as magnetics, gravity, geochemistry, mineral deposits, etc. Production of data on disc is very cost effective and I suggest that all surveys should promote and encourage the use of digital data of various types by supplying it free on disc. This should apply to all the geoscientific data used by the exploration sector which is available from the surveys.

The days of prospectors finding significant deposits exposed at the surface has passed and successful exploration more and more depends on compiling and analysing available data. The ready availability of basic data in digital form will provide a sound platform for the development of new interpretations and concepts for unexposed zones of mineralization at depth.

In addition to this main recommendation I also wish to request that the geological data held by the surveys is also presented as “solid” geological maps at a scale of 1:250,000 which would be the best interpretation of the available information. On the current 1:250,000 map sheets the geology is typically presented as “drift” maps on which is plotted all the superficial material which obscures the underlying geology. The geologists of the surveys are in the best position to interpret the “solid” geology to provide maps of the geology beneath the cover. In addition to their own work they have access to exploration reports by companies and other information to aid them in compiling this geology but have been particularly reticent in producing solid geology maps. Such maps are commonly available from many geological surveys and would be a most welcome addition to the product range in Australia and a valuable aid to exploration.

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