

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON INDUSTRY,
SCIENCE AND RESOURCES

31 JAN 2003

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30 January 2003

The Committee Secretary

Sir /Madam

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| House of Representatives Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Resources |
| Submission No 101 |
| Date Received: 31 JANUARY 2003 |
| Secretary: <i>B. Falke</i> |

OPENING STATEMENT

The geological potential of the land covered by Australian Commonwealth territories for new and valuable mineral discoveries and development for the benefit of our nation is undoubted. Also beyond question is the ability of Australian geoscientists to find such new deposits of minerals in known and currently unknown geological environments.

It is worth remembering that the wealth of this nation was to a very large extent built upon the farming and mineral sectors.

IMPEDIMENTS

1. The single greatest impediment, with respect, is the current legislative concept of "native title". Whilst the aim was noble the result has been counter productive for the resource exploration sector.

Solution : Look at the concept of "native title" from the point of view of "traditional occupiers/users" not "traditional owners". There cannot be much argument with the observation that 40-60 000 years ago when the current indigenous groups started to arrive in Australia that the concept of land "title" as we would know it now simply did not exist.

We must also remember that from the very earliest days of aboriginal presence in Australia the two main occupations were food gathering and mining of ochres for ceremonial purposes & quartz and fine grained hard rocks for axe heads, arrow heads, skin scrapers and the like (ie resource exploration and development.) Perhaps a new look at where all parties are coming from in this important, sensitive and critical concept will result in some acceptable re-positioning of opinion and legislation for the benefit of all concerned!

2. The Commonwealth Government through political pronouncements and policies have tended to turn the opinion of the nation's people away from resource exploration and development. "Mining" has become a dirty word and an unacceptable activity.

And as an example and again, with respect, the pronouncement by the then Prime Minister The Hon Paul Keating some years ago in words to the effect that "no Australian could take comfort in the export of a single tonne of coal.. " at any time would have been foolish but in the situation where coal was earning around \$6 billion pa in revenue for the Australian nation and industry as well as being the single highest revenue earner was ludicrous and not in the best interest of the nation!

Solution : The Australian Government must start to repair the damage done by itself in past times to encourage resource exploration and development again.

3. Further to 2. Community attitudes in terms of "mining and the environment" need careful and sympathetic review.

Solution : The Australian Government and the resource development companies need to further come to terms with how "mining" can co-exist with communities and their attitudes to the environment etc.

CONCLUSION : It is indeed satisfying that this Inquiry is being taken into this sector of national importance.

These opinions are personal.

31/01/2003

Respectfully submitted

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