



Australian Government
Geoscience Australia

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee
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Dear Committee

Defence Legislation Amendment (Woomera Prohibited Area) Bill 2013

Thank you for your email of 23 December 2013 inviting Geoscience Australia (GA) to make a submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Defence Legislation Amendment (Woomera Prohibited Area) Bill 2013 (the Bill).

GA is supportive of the Bill as it implements the co-existence scheme of Defence users and non-Defence users for the Woomera Prohibited Area (WPA) recommended by the Review of the Woomera Prohibited Area (the Review). The Bill provides clarity and certainty for non-Defence users of the WPA. The Review proposed that the WPA be opened up for resources exploration, while ensuring Defence primacy for its war materiel testing. The Bill ensures mineral and energy explorers a regulatory process to enable access to the highly prospective WPA.

GA provided technical advice to the Review on the known and potential (undiscovered) mineral and energy resources in the WPA. The WPA has a diversity of mineral deposits and energy resources. The WPA contains four operating mines: Challenger, a mid-size gold mine in the west; Cairn Hill, a small iron ore (magnetite)-copper-gold mine; Prominent Hill copper-gold mine in the south east; and the iron ore mine at Peculiar Knob (Southern Iron). There are some 150 known occurrences of minerals dominated by gold, iron ore, copper and opal but including uranium, silver, zinc, lead, diamonds, and heavy mineral sands. The potential for undiscovered deposits of the different mineral and energy commodities varies across the WPA and reflects the range of geological environments.

The WPA is one of the more prospective areas for mineral and energy resources in Australia and will continue to attract exploration activity. The proposed legislation provides a framework within which such exploration can occur.

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Should the Committee require further information or discussion please do not hesitate to contact me

Yours sincerely

Dr Chris Ridgman
Chief Executive Officer
Geoscience Australia

14 January 2014