



Australian Government

Geoscience Australia

Cnr Jerrabomberra Avenue
and Hindmarsh Drive,
Symonston ACT 2609

GPO Box 378,
Canberra ACT 2601
Australia

+61 2 6249 9111
www.ga.gov.au

ABN 80 091 799 039

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Senator Slade Brockman
Chair
Senate Economics Legislation Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator Brockman

On reviewing the Proof Hansard of the testimony given by Geoscience Australia at the Senate Estimates hearing on 24 October 2019, we find that some of the information provided to the Committee would benefit from clarification and correction.

The following exchanges occurred between Senator Rex Patrick and Dr Andrew Heap, Chief of Resources Division, Geoscience Australia:

Senator PATRICK: I think you might have asked some questions while I was out of the room in relation to state government splits, in terms of splitting money, so I'll look to the Hansard for that. What do you estimate the impact on the rate of resource exploration would be if this information were not provided free of charge?

Dr Heap: Going back to the question about the investment attraction, one of the key comments we keep getting about why we have a competitive advantage in Australia is that it is because we make this data freely available, so it keeps us competitive in a global sense. So the global resources industry look to us and think Australia's a fantastic model because we can get access to this freely available data to make investment decisions that are global. I don't think we would get that investment as much if we didn't make it available, because we've seen overseas that, where countries decide to charge for the data, there's a drop off in the exploration. I can't put an actual number on it because I don't have the details, but there's definitely a reduction in exploration as a result of changed practices.

I would like to provide additional information to my statement '...where countries charge for the data, there's a drop off in the exploration'.

When high-quality pre-competitive data is made freely available, such as in Australia, there is an uptake in exploration investment. One of Australia's advantages in attracting mineral and energy exploration investment is the quality, accessibility and free availability of our pre-competitive geoscientific data. Providing freely accessible data reduces impediments to investing in mineral exploration. The provision of this data publically, through surveys such as the Fraser Institutes Annual Survey of Mining Companies, exploration companies report that access to quality geoscientific data is a major factor in deciding where to invest exploration funds and lack of such data is a strong deterrent to investment. In addition, internationally in Norway, Sweden, Finland and Canada, Australia's key competitor countries for exploration investment, Australia has been identified as a global leader in terms of the quality and accessibility of our freely available pre-competitive geoscientific data.

I apologise for any inconvenience caused and ask that you alert other members of the Committee to this correction.

Yours sincerely



Andrew Heap

Chief of Resource Division

Geoscience Australia
