

31 October 2017

Dr Sean Turner
Acting Committee Secretary
Environment and Communications Reference Committee
Email: ec.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Dr Turner

**INQUIRY INTO THE REHABILITATION OF MINING AND RESOURCES PROJECTS AS IT
RELATES TO COMMONWEALTH RESPONSIBILITIES – QUESTION ON NOTICE**

The following information is provided in response to the question on notice asked by the Senate Committee at the public hearing held in Burnie on the 12 October 2017. The question relates to those sites that may be eligible for funding under the Rehabilitation of Mining Lands Trust Fund (the Trust Fund).

The Trust Fund is overseen by a steering committee of relevant stakeholders including government agencies, land managers and industry. The selection of sites is predicated on a set of eligibility criteria, followed by priorities for rehabilitation. For a site to be considered for rehabilitation is must meet the following eligibility criteria:

1. The site must be Crown Land;
2. It must have been worked by private enterprise and not by Government or by Government instrumentality; and
3. It must be abandoned with the responsibility resting with the Crown. Current liabilities of existing tenement holders are not considered. However, work may be done on tenements where the tenement holder has been absolved of responsibility for pre-existing degradation.

Other factors that are considered include:

4. Threats to the safety or health of the public, stock or native flora/fauna;
5. Pollution impacts on adjoining properties or catchments;
6. Erosion or land degradation on/off site;
7. Visual amenity, and
8. Public concerns / complaints.

Of the 60 sites where rehabilitation work has been completed through the Trust Fund to date, each site met criteria 1-3 and would also have met a combination of criteria 4-8. The Trust Fund has a master list of known high priority rehabilitation sites that meet the majority of the criteria listed above. This list contains 73 sites.

There are other sites, not on the priority list, that would be eligible for funding. However the risk profile of these sites is not high. If circumstances change or new information comes to hand that changes the risk profile, then work is completed on an as needs basis. To give an example, a fire or change in land use may increase the risk profile in relation to open mine shafts and adits, in which case remediation work is completed through the Trust Fund to mitigate the risk. This project is an ongoing one.

The report for the Life of Mine Conference 2012 – ‘Mapping and Prioritising Rehabilitation of Abandoned mines in Australia’ by *Unger et al.* (2012), lists the number of abandoned mine sites for Tasmania at 4226 as of 2011. This figure originates from the Mineral Deposit Database held by Mineral Resources Tasmania (MRT) and includes all records of mineral deposits including operating mines and quarries, known deposits that have not be developed, and sites that have been rehabilitated. The database also records individual mine features as a separate site in some instances. As a result, this figure is not an accurate representation of abandoned mines sites in Tasmania.

In light of the information gap, the Trust Fund steering committee recently approved a project to complete a comprehensive inventory of abandoned mine sites in Tasmania. The inventory, when complete, will allow a more refined prioritisation of sites utilising the approaches currently under development by the Leading Practice sub-group on Mine Rehabilitation. The list will also greatly assist land managers in their day to day management of the land. MRT is currently scoping this project and as yet does not have a timeframe for completion.

I would like to also take the opportunity to make a correction to information provided to the Senate Committee. The amount of forfeited security deposits forfeited is approximately \$170,000, not \$80,000 as stated at the hearing. This money is available for rehabilitation work on any abandoned site that meets the eligibility criteria as approved by the Trust Fund steering committee.

If you have any queries regarding the information provided, or wish to seek further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me

Jennifer Parnell
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