

To: Northern Territory Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security

Re: Review of the Alice Springs Water Allocation Plan

15 December 2020

Introduction

AMEC appreciates the opportunity to provide comment to the Department's five-year statutory review of the Alice Springs Water Allocation Plan 2016-2026 (WAP), in accordance with the *Water Act 1992*.

About AMEC

The Association of Mining and Exploration Companies (AMEC) is a leading national industry association representing over 350 members from all around Australia. Our members are explorers, emerging miners, producers, and a wide range of businesses working in and for the industry; we have 20 members companies actively exploring, mining and developing projects in the Northern Territory.

The mining and exploration industry make a critical contribution to the Australian economy, employing over 255,000 people. In 2018/19, these companies collectively paid over \$39 billion in royalties and taxation, invested \$36.1 billion in new capital and generated more than \$283 billion in mineral exports. In 2019/20, \$2.8 billion was spent on minerals exploration, representing an 18% increase from the previous year.

The Review

This Plan applies to all surface water and groundwater within the Alice Springs Water Control District, and Industry has a keen interest in ensuring provisions arising from the Review sustain current and future mineral exploration and mining developments.

Recommendation: Update the Water Act reference for the needed exemption for mining activities.

Future developments

AMEC made a substantial submission to the Territory's Operation Rebound Strategy in July 2020¹. The recently released Territory Economic Reconstruction Commission's final report identified ambitious targets to rebuild the economy post-COVID-19, to emerge from the current structural deficit.

Mineral exploration and mining were acknowledged as the greatest opportunity to achieve the goals centred around jobs and growth. The pipeline of potential projects, coupled with strong global demand, lead to the Report's target to open:

¹ <https://secureservercdn.net/198.71.233.51/0h5.0cf.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Submission-to-NT-re-Operation-Rebound.pdf>

- Two new mines in the next two years;
- Five new mines in the next five years; and
- Ten new mines in the next 10 years²

Some tenements within this region are already “pegged”, indicating their likelihood to be further explored for mineral deposits; when this activity commences is dependent on access permits and the ability to attract investment. A future mine may need the opportunity to access surface water.

16.2.2. Permits for Groundwater Extraction

The WAP references the Water Act Section 7(3) to state that permits for the construction of all water bores within the water control district, are not required for mining or petroleum activity.

This statement is supported; however, the referenced Section does not exist within the current Water Act. AMEC asks that this exemption statement reference is updated.

Closing comments

AMEC appreciates opportunities to work cohesively with the Department. We welcome future consultation as the objectives of the Territory’s growth plan are implemented, to ensure Industry’s strong contribution to the Territory is considered and facilitated. We also request involvement in the development of the new WAP in 2026.

For further information contact:

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² https://ntrebound.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/952301/terc-final-report.pdf