

GEOLOGICAL, EXPLORATION AND MINING SERVICES ASSOCIATION NT INC.

ABN: 18819195334

trading as

GEMSA NT

“Supporting Mineral Explorers in Australia’s Northern Territory”

Member Newsletter for July 2023

Membership Renewal Now Due

- ✓ GEMSA NT Members will soon receive the Annual Membership Renewal Notice and Tax Invoice for the 2023/2024 year commencing 1 July 2023. GEMSA NT look forward to your continued support to provide a local voice focused on the maintenance of a healthy Minerals Exploration Industry in the NT.

Services & Suppliers Register

- ✓ We encourage all GEMSA NT Members to place an entry in the Services and Suppliers Register. Contact us at gemsa.nt2020@gmail.com if you need assistance with your entry. Currently only 58% of Members have placed an entry in the Register.
- ✓ The [Register](#) is accessible to all website visitors, but only Members are eligible to advertise in the Register.
- ✓ GEMSA NT believes that the central location for advertising the currently unpromoted array of Services and Suppliers available to the NT, will assist GEMSA NT to achieve one of its main aims, to see local businesses and those operating in the NT win opportunities.
- ✓ Exploration and Mining Companies operating in the NT are also encouraged take up GEMSA NT Membership as a demonstration of their support for local opportunity.

Member Jobs Board

- ✓ GEMSA NT Members who have jobs that need doing or personnel they are seeking can advertise requirements on MY JOBS BOARD via their Member Page on the website once logged in. This feature is only accessible to GEMSA NT Members, which should allow for collaboration between Services and Suppliers where supply may not be able to be met through the one channel.

Website Promotion

- ✓ GEMSA NT has been fairly quiet outside its Membership about the new website and Register facility. We plan to soon commence promoting the website as a reference tool for Exploration and Mining Companies to seek resources from and to attract further Services and Suppliers to promote themselves and win opportunities. The idea is to educate the industry about the wealth of expertise available in the NT.
- ✓ We ask current GEMSA NT Members to help spread the word and suggest your contacts view the GEMSA NT [website](#) and consider becoming a member.
- ✓ Look out for our new promotional posters coming soon. GEMSA NT plan to place these in strategic locations to create further interest in GEMSA NT and to encourage traffic to the website.

---- NT TOPIC OF INTEREST ----

WATER REGULATION – MINERALS EXPLORATION

Representatives of GEMSA NT recently met with the Water Resources Division of DEPWS to confirm the regulatory requirements under the *Water Act 1992* (NT) for minerals exploration in the NT. It was an enlightening discussion, and we came away with some key points to share with Members.

Water Extraction Licence Requirements

Bore Water

- There is an exemption to groundwater extraction licence requirements for take of up to 5ML per year outside of the [Darwin Rural Water Control District](#).
- The exempt volume applies to a mineral title, and cannot be transferred/accumulated (ie if an explorer has 3 titles, they cannot take 15ML on a single title, it must be no more than 5ML on each title).
- Reasonable steps must be taken to ensure that 5ML is not exceeded. It is recommended that water taken is measured and recorded using meters installed in accordance with the [Non-Urban Water Metering Code of Practice](#) to ensure the exempt volume is not exceeded.
- Water taken from dams filled from bores is considered bore water (ie turkeys nest dams or water tanks).

Surface Water

- There is no relevant exemption for the take of surface water, all take requires a [surface water extraction licence](#).
- The licensing process takes approximately 6 months, it is recommended that explorers engage with DEPWS early to understand the process.
- Water Resources had an independent review and options assessment undertaken on the regulation of Mining Activity under the Water Act last year. Surface water take/licensing requirements were considered as part of that. At the time of writing this newsletter, Water Resources confirmed that new legislation has now been passed in the Water Act Amendment Bill to improve the transition of mining operators (including explorers) into the licensing regime. The new legislation is said to streamline the licencing process, for existing operators and will come into force next quarter.

Water Resources will be providing updated application forms and advice to operators. They are still working through options to better regulate surface water take for new explorers. We are advised that the new application forms for the streamlined licence process are imminent. GEMSA NT will provide links when available.

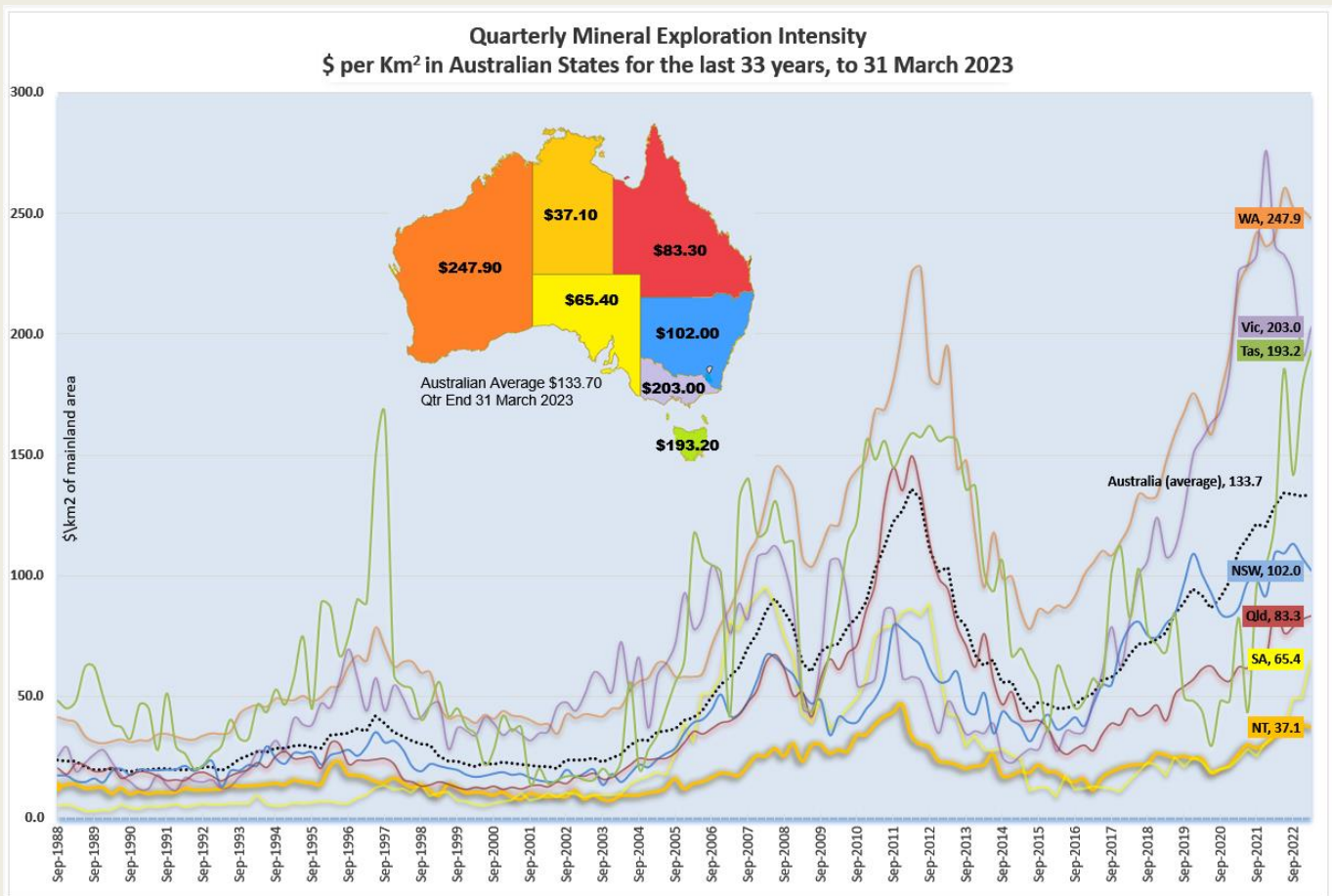
Water Bore Work / Driller Licencing

- Undertaking bore work for mining activity (which includes exploration) requires a [Bore Work Permit](#) everywhere in the NT.
- Permit applications need to specify the land tenure on which the bores will be drilled (no need for exact bore locations). The permits take approximately 2 weeks to process and will last for 2 years.
- Water bores must be drilled by [NT Licensed Drillers](#). Drillers licensed in other states can apply for an interstate transfer which allows them to operate at the same class and endorsements. This applies to driller licences for all states other than NSW. The process takes approximately a week once a complete application is submitted.
- In recent months, DEPWS has been working towards an automatic mutual recognition process, which would only require notification from an interstate driller that they are planning to drill in the NT. This will not apply to NSW and QLD licensed drillers. This has now been operationalised. The notification form can be requested from water.regulation@nt.gov.au for now. An updated webpage will be published soon with relevant information.
- Water bores left in place for longer than 10 days must comply with the National Minimum Construction Requirements for Water Bores in Australia.

The process to obtain a Drilling Licence in the NT (class 1) requires 6 holes drilled under supervision of a licensed driller, an exam and an interview. As the driller progresses through to higher classes there are further requirements. For any diamond drillers operating without a Drilling Licence (for water) Water Resources can engage with them to talk them through the requirements/ process.

Water Resources, DEPWS (18 July 2023).

GEMSA NT are interested to hear from Members about NT related mineral exploration processes that affect progress or confidence in the NT that could benefit from a review or further clarification.



Latest ABS Figures - Exploration Intensity in the NT

Our updated Exploration Intensity graph shows national expenditure at near- record levels of \$133.7/km², almost pipping the \$135.9/km² achieved in the March Quarter 2012 (before commencing its plummet into the doldrums of 2013-2017).

Highlights include strong results in Tasmania and South Australia. SA appears to have pulled out of its race with the NT to be bottom runner, showing decisive improvements over the last few quarters. They must be adding something to the water, and NT needs to investigate what that is (I am hoping it's shiraz).

Other jurisdictions are all lower than recent highs, possibly as new imposts on exploration activity start to be enforced. While Victoria, which in December 2021 recorded Australia's highest (ever?) exploration intensity of \$276/km², showed a slight uptick in the latest quarter, this does little to correct a dropping trend that has led to a decrease in exploration

intensity of more than 25% already since introduction of new environmental laws in mid-2022.

WA too has shown decreases for the last three quarters, and NSW also looks to be trending down. We feel that these figures are very much driven by the land access and permitting regimes that exist in each jurisdiction, and we intend to monitor these as potential means of quantifying the impacts of red and green tape on the exploration spend in the various jurisdictions.

We will occasionally update our normalised chart, which makes it easier to see how each jurisdiction is performing comparatively over time but requires more time to calculate.

Message from our Chair, Geoff Eupene

GEMSA NT's Associate Membership of AMEC, and my membership of its NT Advisory Committee lightens the load of our volunteer committee in keeping up to date on what is happening that may affect our members in the NT broadly, and on the national scene. For example, the agenda of the last meeting in June included:

- *NT Mineral Development Taskforce and follow up Royalty amendment consultations.*
- *Voice referendum and possible flow on implications for our industry*
- *Water Act Reforms and requirements for Explorers and miners (see elsewhere: Starts 1 Aug)*
- *Commonwealth Heritage protection legislation- impacts in the NT?*
- *Commonwealth Critical Minerals report published.*
- *NT Environmental legislative reform and the Mining Management Act*
- *New NT Biosecurity Legislation and possibility for veto for land access*
- *Revisions to NT Sacred Sites Act*
- *NT Minerals Titles Act being reviewed.*
- *Mining Remediation Fund; Mining Board*
- *Facing North group*
- *JORC Committee update.*

This covers a broad range of topics and means that GEMSA NT does not have to specifically pursue each issue that arises that could affect us, and we can restrict our input to those matters that directly affect GEMSA NT's goals to promote NT Mineral Exploration, and to encourage explorers to help strengthen the local sector by as much as possible buying locally.

Sometimes these aims will not align specifically with those of AMEC, and when this occurs, we have the opportunity to contribute GEMSA NT's different view. This would arise in matters like for instance, the commitment to FIFO operations in preference to local labour engagement and skill-building, location of management offices for NT-based projects, and the handling procedure for some operational issues.

The release of the NT Mineral Development Taskforce report, which studiously avoided inviting input from GEMSA NT (too close to the action was the only reason I heard), seems to be focused on the causes why the NT has so many projects in its development pipeline but so few actually attracting a final development decision. Royalties have been singled out for reform, and GEMSA NT has no argument with that. The current double- dipping royalty regime does nothing to stimulate investment decisions, which has always been obvious.

I think it is a pity though that this taskforce did not have more courage in addressing the fact that GEMSA NT has consistently identified since it formed: the NT is the worst performing regime in the country in terms of greenfields exploration activity, and its diminishing number of operating mines relates back to this, in addition to the complex royalty structure and other financial factors that lead into the global competitiveness of those projects in our development pipeline. It is not hard to identify other issues that could benefit from the Taskforce's detailed attentions.

For example, a unique and key feature facing the NT has been the presence of about 50% of Aboriginal Freehold land in the NT's total area, and the important role that the mining industry is meant to play on that land in the funding of Land Councils and other institutions for the benefit of Traditional Owners.

My observations in attempting (and sometimes succeeding) to explore on these lands over the last four plus decades is that there is a demand from many TO groups for responsible exploration of their lands, and for the flow-on benefits that this should deliver, but that Land Councils are, perhaps increasingly, severely under-resourced to service that demand, and this in turn discourages investors away from the complex negotiation process that is necessary to secure access to ALT land, including the ongoing administration of the agreements that result.

The lacklustre intensity of exploration activity on the ALT lands is the prime reason why the NT's exploration intensity is dismal. While I acknowledge that an attempt was made to involve Indigenous representatives on the Taskforce, I think it has failed if it has not managed to get the conversation started about this glaring problem for the NT's development. I have no doubt that stimulating exploration activity on ALT land can make a major contribution to resolving many of the problems that confront the NT. This may not yet be widely recognised, but there are already enough examples to prove the point. Perhaps it is not too late to get that under way, because the amount of exploration occurring in the NT will not reach normal levels until explorers and land councils are able to streamline the path for exploration to proceed on those ALT lands where exploration would be welcomed.

I hope all members are having a busy and fruitful dry season that leads to some substantial new hits. I would like to thank all our members for their support and to encourage you to make our colleagues who are not yet members aware that they too would be welcome to join us. As our numbers swell, our ability to do more to further our aims increases. Please remember that we are all volunteering our efforts here, and if you wish to help, we would be very happy to expand the committee so we can achieve more.

The most recent issue of AMEC's Explorer Magazine (May 2023) is available [here](#):

All the best,

Geoff. □