



South Australian Chamber of Mines and Energy

# Media Release

Thursday 10 December 2009

## **DEFENCE URGED TO CLARIFY ACCESS CONDITIONS FOR MINERS IN SA'S WOOMERA WEAPONS TEST AREA**

The Federal Government's Defence Department has been asked to "clarify" which areas of South Australia's large Woomera weapons testing range can be accessed for minerals exploration and mining.

The request was announced this week by the South Australian Chamber of Mines and Energy (SACOME). Representing the resources industry, SACOME also seeks greater consultation by the Department of Defence on conditions that may be imposed on miners and mineral explorers in the Woomera Prohibited Area (WPA).

SACOME today said the mining industry is pursuing a co-operative approach. "Defence personnel and the resources industry each recognise the interests of the other party in the vast Woomera lands."

Most of the 127,000 square kilometre area of the WPA – the world's largest defence range - is covered by more than 120 mineral exploration leases issued by the South Australian Government, with lease access approvals controlled by the Federal Government. It is considered to be highly prospective, holding great economic potential for South Australia and Australia.

"What we seek now is greater consultation between the Defence and the resources industry about how to co-exist in a way that continues to ensure defence security, transparent access for explorers, transparent conditions applying to mining activity and a clear picture of which areas are open to minerals activity and which are sensitive no-go zones." SACOME's Chief Executive, Mr Jason Kuchel said today.

The area already hosts a large part of the Coober Pedy opal fields and the operating Challenger and Prominent Hill mines. "The mining sector recognises that Defence priorities and control are necessary over the WPA – but the sector has proven it can co-exist within the Woomera boundaries."

"We hope that increased dialogue between the industry, State and Federal authorities will lead to greater understanding on both sides about the requirements of Defence and mining interests.

"We understand and accept that some parts of the WPA are more sensitive than others."

"We just want to ensure everyone has a clearly enunciated and agreed picture of what is and isn't possible," Mr Kuchel said.

"Importantly, greater clarity will allow the resources sector in South Australia the opportunity to make more reasoned commercial judgements about investing in, or undertaking any minerals activity within the WPA boundaries on either a temporary or a sustained basis.

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*Representing, promoting and protecting the resources industry of South Australia*

“South Australia’s resources industry will enter 2010 knowing resurging metals demand globally will renew interest in low sovereign risk, high mineral-profile countries like Australia and its world-class exploration provinces such as the Gawler Craton.

“The industry will be looking to ramp up mineral exploration, discovery and mine development,” said Mr Kuchel today.

“Without greater co-operation and dialogue between all the parties, South Australia’s ability to attract mining investment and job creation opportunities will be diluted.”

“In short, we envisage a future where all parties understand each other’s requirements and in good faith, find ways to accommodate multiple uses of this valuable area.” Mr Kuchel said.

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