

**To: Office of the Premier**

**Re: Mid-Year Budget Review**

**21 September 2023**

## **Introduction**

AMEC appreciates the opportunity to share the industry priorities for the Mid-Year Budget Review. The following proposals are prioritised to streamline reforms and reduce approval timeframes.

## **About AMEC**

The Association of Mining and Exploration Companies (AMEC) is a national peak industry body representing over 560 mining and mineral exploration companies across Australia. Our members are mineral explorers, emerging miners, producers, and a wide range of businesses working in and for the industry. Collectively, AMEC's member companies account for over \$100 billion of the mineral exploration and mining sector's capital value.

Western Australia's mineral exploration and mining sector directly employed over 166,000 workers in May 2023 quarter. The State's minerals sector generated \$179B in sales, accounting for 73% of the State's total sales. More than \$25B was invested in capital expenditure during this period, the highest amount since 2016. In the June 2023 quarter, WA's mineral exploration industry reported that \$648.5M, in original terms, was invested to discover future mines. Just below the record of \$692.4M in September 2022.

## **General Remarks**

AMEC is supportive of the drafting of this legislation. However, we do propose the following amendments to improve the operation of the Act:

### **Department of Mining, Industry Regulation and Safety**

The Department of Mining, Industry Regulation and Safety (DMIRS) needs greater staffing capacity to deliver on needed reforms to ensure the security of Western Australian Titles. Following the *True Fella vs Pantoro South Pty LTD* and *Blue Ribbon* Warden Court cases, there have been needed reforms that have been delayed in large part due to a lack of policy and legislative capacity within DMIRS. Funding additional staff, preferably with legal qualifications, would support the drafting of policy and passage of needed legislative reforms.

The funding of a further two positions (Level 8) in the Resource Tenure Division would support the reduction of a backlog of needed legislative and policy work.

### **Department of Water and Environment Regulation**

The Environment Online platform launched in August 2022. A key concern that has hampered the potential uptake of the platform has been the use of MyGovID as the digital credential to access accounts. The initial insistence of Government that companies use private individuals MyGovID's to submit approvals has caused great dissatisfaction in Industry. Ensuring the sufficient financing of an improved solution that steps away from MyGovID is needed.

The Green Energy Approvals Team is not yet at full staff capacity. Ensuring that group is sufficiently resourced must be a priority for the Government.

The reforms to the Commonwealth environmental legislative framework, namely the Environmental Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act amendments, will have a substantial impact to the operations of DWER. AMEC expects a public consultation toward the end of November on two draft pieces of Commonwealth legislation and five national standards. One of the legislative reforms will enable the development of Environment Protection Australia, the Commonwealth version of the WA EPA; and the other will reform the EPBC Act into the Nature Positive Act. How smoothly Western Australia's environmental legislative framework interacts with the new Commonwealth requirements could create substantial time delays and confusion for Industry. The prioritisation of resourcing to ensure that Western Australia's environmental regulatory framework.

### **Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attraction (DBCA)**

The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attraction (DBCA) needs staffing invested in policy development and approvals. The interaction between DBCA and other government agencies is frequently identified by Industry as a cause of delays in approvals. This may not be the reality, but the lack of policy guidance reduces the transparency of interactions with DBCA. An investment in greater resources to delivery policy outcomes is needed.

As both Industry's projects and the regulatory framework both increase in complexity, the need for the specialist scientific advice from DBCA increases. Anecdotally Industry relays that they are noting an increased reliance on DBCA, a Government investment in boosting the scientific capacity within DBCA, explicitly to support Industry approvals, would be welcome.

### **Re-energise Streamline WA**

StreamlineWA outlined 12 major areas of reform to be prioritised by the State Government to deliver optimised outcomes in environmental approvals. The proposed reforms were built on years of robust consultation prior to their development and implementation. While Streamline continues it is now a subunit within the Department of Treasury. This de-escalation of this Government initiative is telling and should warrant reconsideration.

### **Final comments**

AMEC welcomes the opportunity to discuss the proposals at the Government's earliest convenience.

### **For further information contact:**

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