

Horticultural

- Participated in two inter-agency workshops in Tennant Creek and Ti-tree to establish programs to support local indigenous employment opportunities and related training requirements arising from commercial horticultural projects being developed by Centrefarm Aboriginal Corporation on Aboriginal land within the Warrabri (Alekarenge) and Ahakeye Aboriginal Land Trusts respectively

SUBOUTPUT 3.3

Process applications for consent to explore and mine on Aboriginal land.

EXPLORATION AND MINING PROVISIONS

The mining provisions (Part IV) of the Land Rights Act establish a scheme for the control of access to Aboriginal land for mineral exploration and mining, including oil and gas.

A once-only consent applies at the exploration stage, so that where traditional Aboriginal landowners agree to exploration, and a mineral discovery follows, then an agreement must be negotiated to allow mining to proceed.

In response to exploration applications the Central Land Council is required to consult traditional Aboriginal landowners to ascertain their views and achieve informed decisions.

Where an agreement is made for exploration or mining, traditional Aboriginal landowners must understand the nature and purpose of the terms and conditions and, as a group, consent to them.

In this way, rights and interests of traditional Aboriginal land owners are protected and certainty achieved for the miners to proceed.

EXPLORATION LICENCE APPLICATIONS (ELAs AND EPAs)

Applications for the consent to the grant of 65 exploration licence applications (including exploration permits for oil and gas) were received under the mining provisions during the year.

The Central Land Council consented to 35 exploration licence applications covering 8,960 square kilometers of Aboriginal land.

A further 15 exploration licence applications were refused and another 18 were withdrawn during the negotiating period. (See summary table below comparing last year's results.)

The average time for processing ELAs that were either consented or refused during this financial year is 2.3 years - from the date the applications were received.

This is a longer average time than last year's result (1.5 years) and comparable to years previous to last year.

A significant influence on the result is the time taken on a particular group of ELAs located on the Haasts Bluff Aboriginal Land Trust that were subject to delays associated with the applicant seeking to joint venture with other parties.

Another particular group of ELAs, which were consented to during the year, are located in a very remote location on Lake Mackay Aboriginal Land Trust and as such the consultations were complex and time consuming.

As well these licences were subject to time consuming joint venture arrangements.

Overall, the rate of processing, however, has kept pace with new applications for consent to the grant. The result is the number of exploration licences under negotiation as at 30 June 2006 is 146 compared with 149 last year. Significantly, a total of 47

exploration licences and permits were granted on Aboriginal land by the Northern Territory Government – a result of the large number of ELAs consented to in the previous year.

Consultations and agreement making

Fourteen (14) large-scale traditional Aboriginal owner consultation meetings were conducted by the Central Land Council during the year to consider 39 exploration licences located across the Tanami, Tennant Creek, Haasts Bluff and Eastern regions.

Exploration proposals were presented at these meetings by the applicants and traditional Aboriginal owners' views ascertained and instructions obtained by the Central Land Council.

Negotiations during the year resulted in seven (7) new exploration agreements, relating to 31 exploration licences.

Ausquest Ltd, an Australian junior exploration company, signed three agreements for eight (8) exploration licences on the Atneyte Aboriginal Land Trust, east of Alice Springs.

This follows Ausquest's first agreement last year and delivers it a major exploration holding in this previously unexplored region.

Rio Tinto Ltd has taken over management of the area through a joint venture arrangement and will undertake a major exploration program across a large area of remote and difficult country.

BHP Billiton Minerals Pty Ltd completed an agreement for five exploration licences that also cover the Atneyte Aboriginal Land Trust as well as the Pmere Nyente Aboriginal Land Trust, which is adjacent and also previously unexplored.

Newmont (Australia) Ltd signed another two exploration agreements in the Tanami region following its assumption of the