



**Marion Scrymgour**

MINISTER FOR NATURAL RESOURCES, ENVIRONMENT AND ARTS

28 August 2006

## **STRINGENT CONDITIONS FOR MINE EXPANSION**

Environment Minister Marion Scrymgour has advised Mines Minister Kon Vatskalis that while the McArthur River Mine has appeared to solve significant engineering problems, any possible Mining Management Plan would require stringent conditions for it to operate to protect the environment, to benefit the local community and protect Territory taxpayers from future risk.

“I have received the Assessment report from the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) and have considered it and the company’s Public Environment Report (PER) and other submissions,” said Ms Scrymgour.

“The company’s amended proposal satisfies me that the river diversion in engineering terms will now not fail in a major flood event, as was the case with the original proposal under which there was a 20-50 per cent chance of failure in any year.

“However, I have advised my colleague there are still environmental risks that must be addressed.

“I have advised my colleague that MRM should take an active approach to preventing environment damage rather than waiting for damage to occur and then reacting when things go wrong.

“This is the view shared by the vast majority of the mining industry.

“Specific concerns include:

- significant and long term risks of contaminants entering the river and ground water—the proposed tailings facility would not be accepted in Queensland and Victoria;
- The approach to revegetation of the river diversion;
- insufficient attention to the social impact of the mine on the local region.

“If the mine expansion proceeds it will need to be on the basis of stringent conditions which must apply long after the projected mine closure. We cannot tolerate another Mt Todd—for which the Territory taxpayer will be paying for many years to come.

“I have advised the Mines Minister that any potential Mine Management Plan should consider:

- a very substantial bond, including provision for post-mine environmental management;

- properly researched management of the vegetation of the river diversion, including retaining the existing channel until vegetation of diversion is shown to have worked,
- that approval of the diversion is contingent on its success;
- proper management of potential contaminants from both mine site and tailings facilities, well beyond the projected life of the mine;
- the establishment of a mine-funded monitoring and regulatory agency; and
- a legal agreement or legislation to guarantee positive social benefits for the Gulf community.

“I have listened to the many service providers that work to the mine, this is why I would like to see guarantees over local employment and sourcing of services and materials in the Territory—currently the MRM sources materials such as gravel from Queensland, for example.

“I have advised the Mining Minister the mine expansion can be approved so long as it protects the environment and delivers real benefits for generations of Territorians to come.”

Please note, the Assessment Report can be accessed as of 3pm today.

**Link:**

[www.nt.gov.au/nreta/environment/assessment/register/mcarthur/index.html](http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/environment/assessment/register/mcarthur/index.html)

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