

Northern Territory

In a letter to the editor, executive officer of the Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation, Kelvin Leitch, says the Chief Minister's suggestions that new land claims would result in the public paying permit fees to use local beaches were 'spurious'. The township of Nhulunbuy and bauxite mine are located inside leases on Aboriginal land and a permit issued by the Corporation is required under the Aboriginal Lands Act (NT) 1980 for use of designated recreational areas. A 'user pays' system now operates which Mr Leitch says raised less than 12% of the annual staffing and operation costs of Dhimurru. Traditional owners have recently contributed 40% of annual operating costs from their own mining royalty receipts. (*NT News, June 24, p11*)

The Proposed Darwin to Alice Springs Railway

The NT government hopes to overturn a Central Land Council claim for land in Devil's Marbles National Park which is held in trust by the government's Conservation Land Corporation. Chief Minister, Shane Stone, said the claim would tie up development in the park and threaten security of tenure over the proposed Alice Springs to Darwin railway corridor. Mr Stone said a High Court ruling had already precluded land held by the land corporation from being claimed under the Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act. (*NT News, 23 June, p3*)

Northern Territory Chief Minister, Mr Shane Stone, called for the Commonwealth acquisition of the land and stated that claims by the two Land Councils in the NT are causing major problems. He said 'they are not insurmountable', although he confirmed that negotiations with the land councils had broken down. Chairman of the Northern Land Council, Mr Galarrwuy Yunupingu, accused the NT Government of trying to shift responsibility for railway corridor difficulties to land councils saying; 'the truth of the matter is that negotiations are continuing'. (*Ad, 23 July, p5*)

Western Australia

Gibson Desert [NNTT Ref#WC96/77]

A state government proposal to give Aboriginal people a large area over the Gibson desert has been withdrawn. 'Special freehold' and perpetual leasehold over 25 million hectares around Warburton, 1500 km NE of Perth was offered to the Ngaanyatjarra people in May 1996. The government is now offering only 4100 sq km around the Kiwirrkurra Aboriginal community on the NT border. This coincides with the Kiwirrkurra people's claim, one of 10 lodged with the NNTT in the initial 25 million hectare proposal. Daniel O'Dea, speaking for the claimants, said the government was concerned by a description of the original proposal as a 'state within a state'. (*CT, 3 June, p4*)

MINING AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Northern Territory

Energy Resources Australia and Jabiluka

ERA will return to the Federal Court where an attempt is being made to block the development of Jabiluka. Traditional owner, Ms Yvonne Margarula is seeking to prevent Federal Government approval for ERA to export uranium from the mine and claims that the

NT Government has issued the Jabiluka mineral lease illegally. ERA's chief executive, Mr Phillip Shirvington, said the company has legal advice that the lease is valid. ERA wants to modify the 1982 agreement that gives the company the right to develop Jabiluka, so that the ore can be processed at Ranger. To accomplish this a new agreement with the Aboriginal owners needs to be reached. Mr Shirvington said he hoped to have the agreement in place by next year. (*SMH 9 July, p33*)*

The High Court's Wik decision has raised question over the validity of 800 titles granted and 650 titles renewed since the Native Title Act became law on January 1 1994. Simon Jemison reports that this has 'forced the NT Department of Mines and Energy to stop issuing mining titles'. Despite this, he writes, the NT mining industry has never looked better. (*Fin R, 16 July, p41*)

Western Australia

Murrin Murrin

Anaconda Nickel Ltd's Murrin Murrin nickel project has received a \$96.4 million endorsement from Australian and offshore institutional investors. Constructions of the project were already under way after a lengthy native title negotiations with the Aboriginal groups in the area. (*CT, 24 July, p15*)

Queensland

Century Zinc Mine

CZL's native title agreement with Aboriginal communities of the Gulf region has made Indigenous employment opportunities a key focus for the company. Of the \$60 million compensation agreement, \$45 million is dedicated to creating job opportunities. Managing Director Ian Williams said 'our commitment is to work with the community to create opportunities to spend money on training'. Century Zinc is on track to begin construction of its Gulf of Carpentaria mine by October. (*Aus, 9 July, p22*)

Cape Flattery

Yesterday a decision by the Federal Court that allows miners to claim compensation payments to Aboriginal Communities as deductions, was welcomed by the mining industry. The decision will allow Cape Flattery to claim for more than \$1 million paid to the Hope Valley community under a 1992 agreement. Queensland Mining Council chief executive Michael Pinnock said that the ruling under the Minerals Resources Act could set a precedent for the Native Title Act, having an increased impact on future mining projects. (*CM, 11 July, p 6*)

New South Wales

The NSW Minister for Land and Water Conservation, Kim Yeadon, criticised the Queensland government's decision to proceed with the proposed St George dam before the completion of environmental and impact studies. The Narran Lakes area in northern NSW which would be flooded, is a wetland area and of Aboriginal cultural significance. (*CM, 12 June, p12*)

Commercial viability of the proposed BHP Westcoast Energy Eastern Gas Pipeline is still being assessed. The NNTT is involved in negotiation with the partners and a number of

claimants seeking \$2.7 million in compensation, protection of heritage sites and employment. (*Aus, 16 June, p17*)

Ross Mining expects to start construction of its Timbara gold project within a month and begin pouring gold from production in February next year. This follows a signing of a compensation agreement relating to a native title claim by the Tabulam Bundjalung. (*Aus, 28 July, p72*)* The NSW Aboriginal Land Council said the agreement would help the Bundjalung people by funding services, education, training, employment and community works. Environmentalists are opposing the mine. Council executive director, Mr Aden Ridgeway, said that the agreement should not be taken as a blanket endorsement of mining in Bundjalung country. (*SMH, 26 July, 13*)

South Australia

The South Australian Chamber of Mines and Energy identifies native title as 'the issue of greatest concern'. Some companies claim they have been delayed through uncertainty and have been forced to change exploration plans due to 'access problems', but rapport with Aboriginal communities is growing. Mr Bob Goreing of the SA Chamber of Mines and Energy said 'we have excellent relationships building up' with communities. (*Ad, 5 July, p39*)

Maralinga

Maralinga, once the site for British atomic bomb testing, is to be turned into a tourist destination with caravan and camping facilities. South Australian Aboriginal Affairs Minister, Mr. Brown, said the ambitious plans would go ahead after the site was returned to its traditional owners. Land at Emu, west of Maralinga Village, will be returned to the Maralinga Tjarutja Aboriginal community as soon as the contamination in the area is removed. The SA Government has given a commitment that these lands will be added to community freehold lands once the clean up is satisfactorily completed. (*Ad, 17 July, p3*)*

Gawler Craton

Greenfell Resources announced a two year clearance access had been negotiated with the Aboriginal communities for four tenements through the South Australia Aboriginal Land Rights Movement. Under the agreement which covers all obligations of the Federal and State Native Title Act as well as Aboriginal Heritage legislation, Grenfell will reimburse the communities for the surveying costs, but is not required to make any up front payments. While Grenfell is the first company to execute an access clearance agreement covering Native Title issues, it is thought that other companies are close to settlement. Grenfell Director, Nick Limb, said that the agreement provided an 'excellent model' for successful negotiations between Aboriginal groups and mining companies. (*Aus, 24 July, p26*)*

AMENDMENTS

The Government has agreed to an Opposition request from Gareth Evans to meet to develop a co-operative approach to native title. Evans said the 10 Point Plan was unworkable and would be challenged in the courts and opposed in the Senate. Both parties have said a double dissolution would damage the nation. The Opposition is opposed to extinguishment but legislation giving certainty to title, validated in anticipation of a different Wik decision,