## Northern Territory <br> Croker Island [NNTT Ref\#DC94/6]

Justice Howard Olney is hearing the application by Aboriginal traditional owners from seven clans to the seas around Croker and adjacent Islands. The application, over about 2000sq km of waters in both Territory and Federal jurisdictions, is also over the sea bed, subsoil, all living organisms in the water and a column of air above the water. (NTN, 2 Dec, p6)

## South Australia

Eringa [NNTT Ref\#SC96/3]
The public notification period has begun for the Eringa application over pastoral leases and the Witjira National Park, totaling $25,444 \mathrm{sq}$. km, near the SA-NT border. The application was officially accepted by the NNTT in February 1997. (Ad, 15 Jan, p29)

## MINING AND NATURAL RESOURCES

## National

In a new community based approach, mining company WMC has restructured its policy on Indigenous issues by devolving management authority directly to business units affected by native title. (Aus, 16 Jan, p. 23)

## New South Wales

Successful native title negotiations between Aboriginal people and the AGL facilitated a $\$ 55$ million gas pipeline in central western NSW. Representatives of the Aboriginal people stated this agreement highlights the workability of the Native Title Act. The agreement also creates employment opportunities for Wiradjuri and Wongaibon people who will be hired to ensure the protection of their cultural artifacts and sites on the pipeline route. (SMH, 15 Dec, p7)

## Western Australia

Anaconda Nickel has reportedly excised areas from their Murrin Murrin project site after disputes with the Bibila Lungutjarra and Goolburthunoo peoples over the agreement reached last year. (WA, 20 Jan, p9)* The Henry Walker Group has secured the contract for the Murrin Murrin project, from Anaconda and Glencore. Henry Walker will enter a joint venture with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commercial Development Corporation. The CDC plans to divest its stake in the joint venture to the Aboriginal people of the Murrin Murrin region. (FinR, 28 Jan, p20)

Mineral Commodities' White Foil project near Kalgoorlie hopes to resolve native title issues to allow production early next year. One of the two leases over the gold deposit is currently subject to three native title applications, the other, ten. (Aus, 26 Jan, p32)

## Queensland

The Mitakoodi - Juhnjlar people have challenged the validity of the Ernest Henry copper gold mine in Queensland in the Federal Court. They claim the leases for the mine granted by the Queensland Government is not valid, as it did not follow the processes of the Native Title Act. (Aus, 2 Dec, p9) The validity of more than 500 Queensland mining leases issued between January 1994 and December 1996 could be called into question if the injunction is granted. (CM, 3 Dec, p2)*

Queensland Department of Mines and Energy have revealed that more than 1000 applications for mining exploration have been stalled due to State Government policy not to grant any licenses or permits over any land that is not under freehold title. DME Director of resource development said that companies had switched their attention to land over which they already hold leases. (CM, 8 Jan, p23)

## South Australia

Manna Hill Mining Company confirmed it had become the first mining company in South Australia to be granted a mining lease on pastoral land since the Wik decision after successful negotiations with three native title claimant groups - from the Kuyani and Adnyamathanba people - over land north of Manna Hill. The agreement includes training and employment and royalties. (Ad, 16 Jan, p5)*

AMENDMENTS
The Executive Director of Minerals Council criticised Labor's alternative Amendment package. (Media Release, 1 Dec)

The Senate blocked the Governments proposed six-year sunset clause, a key element of the 10-point plan, with the support of Senator Harradine. (Aus, 2 Dec, p1)*

The National Farmer's Federation is planning a series of test cases regardless of whether the Amendment Bill eventually passes the Senate. (SMH, 3 Dec, p10)

Leader of the Opposition, Mr Kim Beazley, National Indigenous Working Group spokesperson Peter Yu, and Cape York Land Council Chair Noel Pearson, announced that Labor would support an amendment to confirm protection of freehold properties, but argued that the High Court had already protected them. (WA, 5 Dec, p4)*

On 1 January, the Australian Archives released Cabinet Records from 1967, which include records of the 1967 Referendum. These documents may be relevant in light of the foreshadowed challenge to the Native Title Amendment Bill, if passed. The government claimed that the papers support their view, that the constitutional power to make laws for the people of any race can be used prejudicially. (FinR, 6 Jan, p10)* Others have argued that the documents clearly reveal that non-discrimination was the primary purpose behind the referendum and was certainly the basis upon which the public campaign was put. (Age, 7 Jan, p A11)

Acting Prime Minister, Mr Tim Fischer, released a government document called 'Native Title Made Easy', setting out the government's ten point plan. The document has been criticised for restating inaccurate and inflammatory statements about land open to claim, impacts on mining and resources industry, and funds spent on social services for Indigenous peoples. (Age, 12 Jan, pA3)*

The government also released 'Native Title: On the Record, the rhetoric and the reality'. The document contains quotes from the debates of 1993, which it is argued support the

