

Northern Territory

Alice Springs [NNTT Ref#DC94/2]

The Arrernte people, represented by the Central Land Council, are seeking a determination over vacant crown land in and around Alice Springs. (*NTN, 14 Feb, p14*)

South Australia

Arabunna Peoples [NNTT Ref#SC98/2]

Arabunna people have lodged a native title application covering an area over 80,000sq km in central South Australia. A lawyer for the Arabunna people Mr Stephen Kenny stated that the application would not give the Arabunna any right to interfere with pastoral activity, only the right to negotiate with mining companies. (*Ad, 27 Mar, p24*)

MINING AND NATURAL RESOURCES

National

Resource Minister Warwick Parer said the mining policy statement of the Howard Government showed the government's commitment to maximize competitiveness, certainty and investment in the mining industry. The mining policy reiterates firmly the need for environmental and native title laws to give certainty to the mining industry. (*CM, 3 Feb, p2*)

Western Australia

Aboriginal people and 13 mining companies in Western Australia have agreed on a process to identify and clear Aboriginal heritage sites on 22 million hectares of Goldfields. The agreement, the largest of its kind in Australia, was negotiated between the Aboriginal North East Independent Body and the Mining Company Forum with the help of the Goldfields Lands Council in Kalgoorlie-Boulder. The Aboriginal body's interim chairman, Aubrey Lynch, said the agreement showed miners and native title applicants can come to an agreement on the use of land. (*CT, 9 Feb, p2*)

Campaign to change the *Native Title Act* has been accelerated by the WA mining industry. The industry is concerned that 1700 mineral titles in WA will still be trapped in the system even if the Prime Minister's amendments to the native title legislation are approved. Since the proposed change to give only one party the right to negotiate will be back dated only to June 27, 1996. (*ST, 1 Mar, p2*)

The WA Aboriginal land councils and native title representative bodies have called on the State Government to draw up a code of conduct to regulate the behavior of mining companies dealing with native title. The WA Native Title Working Group stated serious questions had been raised by the admission from An Feng Kingstream Managing Director Nik Zuk that his company had paid to lodge Neil Philip's application. (*WAus, 14 Mar, p4*)*

The Ngaluma and Injibandi people have signed an agreement with BHP subsidiary, Pilbara Energy Pty Ltd for extension of a natural gas pipeline across the Burrup Peninsula. The agreement with the eight individual native title applicants from the two groups was the first of its kind by iron ore prospecting arm of BHP in the Pilbara region. (*WAus, 17Mar, p6*)*

Queensland

Federal National MP Bob Katter stated that locals from Mount Isa unless of Aboriginal descent were being overlooked for jobs. A spokesperson for the Pasmaico Century project in

response to this criticism said that job opportunities for local Aboriginal people was an important part of the agreement signed between Century and native title applicants last year. (CM, 6 Feb, p6)

The Ernest Henry mine near Cloncurry and the Queensland Government are seeking a stay on an application by the Mitakoodi/Juhnjar people. The Aboriginal group hopes to have mining suspended and compensation of \$100 million paid. They have alleged that their rights were denied under the *Native Title Act* when the Government issued the mining leases to the venture jointly owned by MIM and Savage Resources. (WAus, 21 Feb, p8)

AMENDMENTS

Senator Nick Minchin stated that the Native Title Amendment Bill 1997 does not prevent practical co-existence of native title with other interests in land that are fundamental to the Wik decision. (Media Release, 2 Feb)

Prime Minister John Howard has increased pressure on the Senate to pass his NTA Bill by insisting unacceptable amendments to the legislation would harm the nation. (CM, 9 Feb, p7) The Prime Minister stated yesterday that the government would not use Senator Mal Colston's vote when its native title legislation returned to the Senate. (FinR, 9Feb, p5) This suggests the amendments to the *Native Title Act* will be rejected a second time when presented to the Senate next month unless Senator Harradine changes his previous stance. (SMH, 9 Feb, p7)* Senator Harradine stated that he would consider 'clarificatory amendments' to the Native Title Amendment Bill to accommodate miners, but would not back down on the key issues (SMH, 17 Feb, p5)*

The Government announced its proposed amendments to the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1936*, which are designed to clarify the taxation implications of native titleholders and other taxpayers. The Government also announced its revised guidelines, for the provision of legal or financial assistance, which the Attorney-General approved under subsection 183 of the *Native Title Act 1993*. (Media Release, 13 Feb)

Deputy Opposition leader Gareth Evans stated that an early double dissolution election triggered by Wik was still a possibility but would be strongly fought by Labor. (CT, 16 Feb, p2)* The Federal Opposition agreed that it was willing to support amendments protecting mining lease renewals from native title applications when the legislation was again debated in Federal Parliament. However, the Opposition and the minor parties have signaled they will continue to reject key planks of the Bill, such as the winding back of native title applicants' right to negotiate on mining projects. (CM, 24 Feb, p6)*

The Anglican Church has urged Prime Minister John Howard to reconsider the Senate's amendments to the *Native Title Act* amid warnings a race-based election would result in 'blood on the streets'. (CM, 20 Feb, p5)*

Yesterday the Prime Minister toured Darwin harbour with Northern Territory Chief Minister Shane Stone, inspecting the \$70 million port development, which is subject to a native title application and declared it another reason for the Senate to pass the Native Title Amendment Bill immediately. (WAus, 27 Feb, p4)*