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The Executive Officer  
Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee  
Parliament House  
Spring St  
East Melbourne VIC 3002

[edic@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:edic@parliament.vic.gov.au)

Dear Sir,

**Inquiry into greenfields mineral exploration and project development in Victoria**

Thank you for the invitation to make a submission addressing the terms of reference. We would like to offer the following comments in relation to:

• **National and international perceptions of Victoria's prospectivity and regulatory environment**

A number of the company's staff are highly experienced professional geologists who have worked throughout Australia and overseas. Their collective experience has given rise to the perception that, while the state of Victoria is endowed with very prospective goldfields, exploration is very difficult and costly. The reasons for this not only include the natural environment (rugged topography, heavily forested, inclement weather) but more importantly, the lack of encouragement that explorers receive from dealing with government. It is hard to see how the legislation could be made more difficult for explorers and I would draw your attention to the following issues that our company has recently experienced:

- Inordinate time required to obtain approval for Work Programmes (in one case 9 months)
- Delays in approvals caused by multiple to and fro-ing between Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE).
- Severe restrictions placed on exploration access in state forests, even on pre-existing tracks and in spite of clear felling operations conducted by forestry.
- Attitude of 'do what I tell you, not what I do' in regards to observed practices of access carried out by forestry and under the auspices of DSE
- Requirement to do costly habitat assessments for exploration drilling where there is a minimal and temporary footprint required, even in re-growth areas
- Requirement to purchase vegetation offsets for exploration purposes where the methods used result in temporary disturbance only. In many of these areas current rehabilitation practices

coupled with natural re-growth would see the areas return to minimal disturbance within 12 months

- Different approaches and programs applied in other Australian and international jurisdictions to foster increased investment in greenfields exploration

In our experience, the government of South Australia has been at the forefront in encouraging exploration in a state historically considered to be resources poor. Some of the initiatives adopted for the benefit of exploration have been:

- An open and often expressed commitment to exploration and the mining industry by government
  - A mineral resources division headed up by visionary geologists
  - Provision of contributory funding for well planned industry drilling programmes
  - Completion of vital geological mapping programmes both in areas of known prospectivity and in covered areas
  - Encouragement to industry by way of government initiated technical conferences involving innovative thinking and approaches to assist exploration
- Consideration of the costs and benefits of greenfields mineral exploration and whether there are opportunities to improve the management of potential conflicts between exploration and other land uses

The nature of this question underlies the perception from government that mineral exploration and the mining industry plays second fiddle to other land uses. The future of mining is always measured by the success of exploration and similarly, the future of exploration in Victoria can be measured by industry's perception of how welcome their exploration dollar is. Opportunities to shrink the divide between exploration, forestry, agriculture and the environment are not unique to Victoria but the success of these initiatives will only be fruitful when government puts its support behind the mineral exploration industry.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeff Randell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Jeff Randell  
Technical Manager  
Geos Mining