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19th August, 2011

Mr. Neale Burgess MP
Chair
Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee
Parliament House
Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

BY EMAIL: edic@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Mr. Burgess,

I thank you for your invitation to make a submission to the Inquiry, and trust you and your Committee do succeed in this ambitious initiative.

Although Mount Rommel Mining Ltd. has every credential needed to respond to any one of the points of reference, the Directors have no wish to respond in that manner.

It is our belief (from direct experience in Victoria) that the State is "open for business" only with great difficulty.

Our Submission to your Committee is to request acknowledgement of these views –

1. Recognise this Fact : In the last month the gold price in US dollars has increased \$200. The demand for gold as a commodity is Worldwide. The notion that a Committee of Inquiry can set themselves a 6 month time schedule without regard for quite current World events is illustrative of the perceived importance of gold to most present-day Victorians.
2. Victoria is by tradition one of the great gold provinces in the World. Today it is a closed shop, not truly open for business. Parties interested in actually producing from any new find (may) face years of delay and risk loss, due to the potential rights of objectors under numerous laws applicable in this State.
3. The present regime for exploration licences has operated more or less since 1965. Where are the gold discoveries attributable to that 46 year old licence procedure? This E.L. process has not in any real way proved a need, and should be dispensed with in respect of gold (and silver) forthwith, by the Minister.

4. The characteristics that enable gold discovery in Victoria are well documented in the publicly available information. The issue of substance is a political one – how to access privately owned land within the gold fields, when the owner of the “surface to 15 metres” does not wish to allow access in any way. Until this political issue is made clear to prospective investors, I think we have every right to regard the prime purposes of the MR(SD) Act as having been perverted, sufficient to inhibit new investment in the ground.
5. The other major area of commercial concern to us was made abundantly clear by the decision to dispose of former Warden Swindells. The result is this – officers of the public service have the power to control the timetable of events for their own reasons. The undefined timetables for stages in the approvals process generates uncertainty for investment. This issue is compounded by the use of Ministerial delegation, the delegate not being able to be held accountable for decisions said made *in the name of the Minister* which business may seek to challenge (a close-out we experienced before Warden Swindells).

Beyond the foregoing, it would not be beneficial to anyone to set down for publication the series of events which brought about our view that the wishes of earlier Parliaments of Victoria have been effectively thwarted by officers of the public service. If your Committee seek to know the facts of those cases, the DPI files relating to this Company are there for scrutiny under privilege.

Our credentials are –

- active explorers in Victoria for several decades;
- privately funded;
- NSX listed;
- involved in developing the Glenfine tailings project, which remediates the site, to the direct benefit of Heritage Victoria, the landowner, and is of value to the Shire of Golden Plains;
- to have defined by drilling new gold at depth at Clunes;
- to function through serious, technically competent, persons who since 1996 have been searching the upstream area, the Madame Berry system, applying different innovative techniques to “see” beyond the lava cover, and to find gold in the bedrock there.

I would think very few explorers in the State of Victoria have a record of mining licence expenditure **per hectare** which match, or exceeds, those of this Company. A comparative table should be made available to members of your Committee.

The heritage of Victoria will always be that of wonderful gold fields. The tradition of miners in this State has been to find ways to recover that gold, as continues today. At present, those traditions are encumbered by many contradictory political objectives, as your Committee will no doubt discover.

Yours sincerely,



F. L. HUNT
Chairman