

Hon Rob Lucas MLC Treasurer

Monday 18 March 2019

Mineral exploration approved at Lake Gairdner

The State Government has finalised approvals to permit mineral exploration at Lake Gairdner, situated 150km north-west of Port Augusta in South Australia's Gawler Ranges.

Treasurer Rob Lucas said the process for the approvals – granted under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act* and which have the expressed support of local native title holders – began under the former Labor government.

In July 2017, Labor granted the approvals required under the *Mining Act* for an exploration program proposed by Cartwheel Minerals Pty Ltd and Mr Rudy AM Gomez. However, an application for a further approval lodged in late 2016 to deal with Aboriginal Heritage had not been finalised by the time of the state election in March, last year.

“Following further consultation lasting another 12 months with Aboriginal stakeholders and the project proponents, the Government has now approved a Native Title Mining Agreement (NTMA) negotiated by Cartwheel and Mr Gomez with the Gawler Ranges Aboriginal Corporation (GRAC) which represents the native title holders over Lake Gairdner,” said Treasurer Lucas.

“An NTMA is an agreement under the *Mining Act* that demonstrates agreement with native title holders for exploration to occur. The application considered by me needed to show that the NTMA satisfactorily deals with any Aboriginal Heritage issues that may arise.”

In July, last year, Treasurer Lucas sought amendments to the NTMA presented to the former Government, including the provision of a Cultural Heritage Management Plan.

“This recognised the fact that in 2004, the whole of Lake Gairdner and areas surrounding it had been registered as Aboriginal Heritage sites by a former Labor government,” Mr Lucas said.

“As well as consulting with GRAC, which has informed me it supports the proposed exploration program, I have also taken advice from the State Aboriginal Heritage Committee in requiring the project proponents to enhance the protections to Aboriginal Heritage provided in their NTMA.

“In deciding not to accept the advice of the Heritage Committee in its entirety, I note that just prior to the last election the then Aboriginal Affairs Minister, Kyam Maher, approved an exploration program on Lake Torrens even though the Committee had declined to make any recommendation about that program.

“In accordance with the requirements of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act*, I am now satisfied that satisfactory procedures are in place to deal with Aboriginal Heritage.

“And I emphasise that these approvals are confined to exploration.”



“Should any exploration undertaken result in the proponents deciding to proceed to mining, they will have to seek further government assessment of their plans.”