**Video Transcript**

**Goldfields Tender Briefing Land Inventory Overview and Findings**

*Fiona Clarke - Minerals Development Victoria*

[Slide: North Central Victorian Goldfields Ground Release Tender Briefing Day]

Okay folks, I think we might make a start for the afternoon sessions.

So for the afternoon session we will start with providing a little bit of context around the tender.

I’ll speak a little bit about the government’s new approach to encouraging investment in minerals exploration into Victoria.

We will then hear from Craig Clifton from Jacobs Group, who’s done an important piece of work for us in relation to regional context.

We’re privileged to have our traditional owner representatives here today to present on traditional owner matters, and we’ll have an opportunity to ask questions and answers, or have a question and answer session with that segment as well.

We’ll then have afternoon tea for about 20 minutes.

And then after the afternoon tea we’ll have the tender briefing session and there’ll be an opportunity to ask questions in that session also.

So we’ll wrap everything up by 3:30 and hope you find this afternoon as informative as this morning.

[Slide: Vision and Outcomes]

So I’d just like to start with a little bit on the regional context for the tender.

So in August 2018 the Victorian Government released its State of Discovery Mineral Resources Strategy, and that’s Victoria’s blueprint for generating investment, jobs and economic development for our regions through fostering exploration and development of our mineral resources in a sustainable way.

So the Minerals Resources Strategy outlines an integrated approach that the government is taking to attracting investment, and that approach includes geoscience research and compiling pre-competitive geoscience information, which we heard some fantastic examples of this morning.

And particularly focusing in on areas where we believe the greatest prospectivity exists, understanding for local land features and aspects and special places of importance to our traditional owners and to local communities.

Engaging and working with local communities and traditional owners and other stakeholders within those areas both in the sense of working up an opportunity, and also with explorers working with those parties as part of their exploration programs throughout.

And conducting competitive tenders, in some cases to attract capable and experienced explorers with good social values, and those tenders are particularly around the most prospective opportunities here in Victoria.

So many of you may be aware that this approach was initially trialled in the Stavely Arc in Western Victoria last year, as John Krabaleski alluded to this morning, and we’ve certainly learnt some lessons from that process which we’ve carried forward into the Goldfields Ground Release approach.

So understanding the local land context features and the aspects and special places offers several benefits.

So it helps us as government to identify areas that may be suitable for exploration, but it also provides explorers the opportunity to have a greater understanding of the regional context in which their exploration programs may be conducted.

So for these reasons the department undertook to commission Jacobs to compile an inventory of key features and special places of importance through the ground release area, and also to assess the potential impacts of exploration and mining given the existing regulatory and legislative controls that exist.

So Jacobs has produced a report with the outcomes of their work, and also GIS datasets, both of which are available for potential tenderers, they’re available on the tender’s website to download.

I’ll just mention that in the process of conducting the study there was several information sources used.

There were public information sources used which Craig will talk more about, but we also undertook really strong consultation with a whole range of stakeholders, local stakeholders with the ground release area, to ensure that those datasets would be as complete as possible, so Craig will talk a little bit more about that.

So before I hand over to Craig I might just mention that it’s worth noting that the study contains available information only, so it’s extremely likely that there is more information out there on other features which may not have been picked up in the study.

And the assessments were conducted by Jacobs.

So I’ll just mention that the Mineral Resources Strategy that John alluded to this morning, this is what it looks like, it’s available on the website for download.

And as I mentioned, the accompanying datasets also are on the tender’s website with the tender reference number of NCVG2019.

You don’t need to remember that because these slides will be later provided on our website, so they’ll be available for download.

And I think, as someone mentioned this morning, these sessions are all being video recorded as well to ensure that if you missed anything you can go back and watch the video recording.

And also for folks who weren’t able to make it today, they’ll have access to the same information that all of us here have had access to.

So without further ado I’d like welcome Craig to the podium to talk us through the Land Inventory Assessment and the key findings.

Thank you.

[Slide: North Central Victorian goldfields land inventory and assessment project - JACOBS]

*Craig Clifton - Jacobs*

Thanks for that introduction Fiona.

What I’d like to talk to you about this afternoon is the project that Fiona was talking about, the North Central Victorian Goldfields Land Inventory and Assessment Project.

[Slide: Overview of the land inventory and assessment project]

The project is one that fits in with the new strategic approach to ground release and exploration, as Fiona was talking about, and in particular it covers off on some aspects of the resource and land use planning and the engagement with communities and traditional owners and stakeholders.

The project itself did a number of things, which are indicated on the left-hand of the slide there.

So we identified what we called regionally significant land uses, values, areas and other features, things that collectively we call features of interest.

We also through that process identified features that would be of high interest to local communities.

Those features were represented in spatial datasets and compiled within an inventory that has the features, but also indicates infrastructure that may be used to support the exploration and any subsequent mining activity.

As part of the process we did an assessment, as Fiona said, of the sensitivity, I guess “of those features” to the potential impacts associated with exploration and any future mining, and then thought about how the regulatory framework for exploration and mining in the state actually helps to control those potential impacts.

And I’ll step through that project and the various outputs from that process in this presentation.

[Slide: North Central Victorian Goldfields Land Inventory]

First of all talking about the inventory was the first main part of the project.

[Slide: An inventory of features of interest within the North Central Victorian Goldfields]

The inventory itself was essential a data mining exercise to find out information about those features of interest, compile that into a report, but particularly into a geospatial database.

We’ve drawn information from that from a range of data libraries, records that are in the public domain, as well as creating datasets that represent features of interest that are spelt out and documented in various plans and strategies and reports, for which there may not be easily obtainable spatial data.

As I said before, the information contains data about the features of interest but also about infrastructure that puts forth exploration and mining.

And we call these explicit sources, so these are the kinds of information that plan strategies, existing datasets, they are features of regional significance.

Also through the consultation process, particularly through the consultation that the department did, and we did with local government, highlighted features that were perhaps more implicit where they were known to be of value or recognised by local communities.

And there wasn’t necessarily any formal existing special data that would represent those things, so part of the process was to create datasets that we could compile in that inventory to allow people to know about those things.

And the process was governed by a set of definitions that help us, and a process that helped us provide a process that was transparent, was consistent and could be repeated.

And the process that we took for this was similar to the one that we adopted for the Stavely Project.

[Slide: Defining features of significance and community interest]

In terms of the process itself, the first thing to do was to establish those definitions and develop an initial set of criteria by which we might define those features of interest.

The kinds of criteria there on the right-hand side of the slide, so some explicit things like it’s listed in an inventory or natural and cultural significance, a matter that might be the subject of an international treaty, migratory birds listed with the Japan, Chinese, Korean migratory bird agreements, something that’s defined in a plan or strategy for example, key natural resource management areas are identified in the North Central Catchment Management Authority’s Regional Catch and Strategy, things that are recognised to have particular environmental values, population centres and the like.

So we went through that to find those criteria, ran some workshops with a range of regional authorities which included various state government agencies, local governments, and we had a workshop with a couple of the traditional owner groups as well to talk through this process.

The information, as I said, was compiled into an inventory which is available to you and then documented in a report, and as I said it contains those explicit and implicit features.

So what does that mean?

What kinds of things are we talking about when we say features of interest?

[Slide: Features of interest]

The map highlights some examples of those from the Goldfields region.

Broadly speaking there are five categories, things of environment value, heritage features, infrastructure features, water and various land uses, so environmental features could include threatened native species, remnant vegetation, wetlands and the like.

We also included land care environmental plantings which were, I guess, what you would call an implicit feature.

Heritage features, natural and historic heritage.

I would note that we include in the inventory areas of Aboriginal cultural sensitivity.

Through consultation with traditional owners, we did not include private information about the location of particular sights and features of Aboriginal heritage significance.

And part of the rationale for that was the incompleteness of that record.

And so it was discussed and the decision was taken, because of the incompleteness of that record, rather than suggest that these are the places where you’re okay from and Aboriginal cultural perspective, better that as explorers you’re looking out, because wherever you encounter Aboriginal heritage that heritage is protected.

And certainly with the threatened species, and it may be more a matter for the mining stage in this sort of process.

You know there are plenty of threatened species records throughout the region but they’re records that certain by happenstance exist.

Where you search for others you may well find them as well.

That’s an important proviso in the dataset, it records known information in publically available records.

The infrastructure included to define things that would potentially exploration and mining like some of the transportation infrastructure, but also captures information on energy provision, agricultural infrastructure, potential areas for solar farm development, which is expanding rapidly in parts of north central Victoria.

Water is an important asset within the region, and so we’ve defined various features from that perspective.

In the south there’s Lake Eppalock and its catchment.

Below the lake there’s the Campaspe River and the aquafer that is fed by the river and rainfall as well which is an important source of environmental flow, but also irrigation in the area.

And in the north there’s the infrastructure that provides irrigation water to the dairy and horticultural production areas in the lower Campaspe area around south of Echuca.

And of course there are a variety of land uses.

There are towns, areas of private and public land that are valued for various things, including agriculture, nature conservation, recreation and the like.

We identified 46 classes of feature, and of which there are many hundreds and probably thousands of individual features that have been identified through that process.

So we go into detail in all of those, but suffice to say there are a number of outputs coming out of the process that are available to you.

[Slide: Inventory outputs]

One is a block summary which is included in some of the tender documents which block-by-block summarises some of the key features associated with each of those blocks covering the various categories that I was talking about before.

The raw geospatial data has been consolidated into a single database so that you don’t have to do what my team did and bring bits and pieces of data from all sorts of places, this is a consolidated reference of the known information relating to the Central Victorian Goldfields.

And we also prepared a gridded dataset which allows us, for each 550x500m grid cell in that area, to identify what are all of the features of interest within that particular grid cell.

So it takes away this sort of spatially explicit nature of that information, but tells you for this 500x500m grid area you’ve got some native threatened species, you’ve got some Aboriginal cultural sensitivity, you’ve got a river, you got a part of Lake Eppalock’s catchment or whatever the case may be.

So the map on the right-hand, you know the bluey-greeny colour end of the spectrum is showing where you’ve got concentrations of features of interest, which tends to follow that sort of drainage pathways there.

So those two geospatial datasets are available to you as a product from this project.

[Slide: Impact assessment framework]

The second part of the project that we did, well what may it mean if these features are there and exploration and mining activities took place?

What is the sensitivity of those features?

What may happen?

And our method for assessing what we might call broadly sensitivity, was using sort of vulnerability as a framing tool.

[Slide: Assessment framework]

And it’s something that is commonly used in climate change.

And as these three key dimensions it has sensitivity, so are the features sensitive to the hazards that may occur.

Exposures, are they likely to experience those hazards or any effects from exploration and mining.

And a sort of vulnerability context we usually use adaptive capacity, but here we’re talking about regulatory control.

So, can the regulatory controls and planning process mitigate those potential effects?

And so we went through a process of thinking about these things.

So the first aspect is exposure and so that really is about what the inventory has compiled.

What are the features that are out there?

And also, to what extent does the regulatory framework govern the exposure of those features to activities associated with exploration and mining.

And I’ll go back into that in a moment.

We thought about, well what kinds of hazards are potentially associated with exploration and mining, and broadly related them into those categories there.

And as I said, considered those sort of two phases in the life cycle, and then thought about what the legislative and planning controls, how effective could they be, not just in governing exposure but mitigating, helping to control the potential effects of those activities on the various features of interest.

[Slide: Exposure to exploration]

First of all thinking about exposure, so the regulatory framework, you know, particularly the Mineral Resources Sustainable Development Act, influences the exposure of features.

Broadly speaking there are two classes of land, land that’s available for those activities, land that is not available.

Land that’s unavailable within this area is national park, and so there are areas of national park within and adjacent to the Goldfields area.

There’s also a proposed national park in the Wellsford Forest area, it’s currently state forest but is proposed under the VEAC recommendations to become national park.

If that recommendation is accepted then that means not that exploration can’t occur, but it can only occur below 100m down.

The other category of land, which is most of the land within this area, is potentially available, although the regulatory framework has processes that sort of influences the level of protection of things in parts of that area.

So there’s restricted public land which considers crown land that follows some water courses through the area, nature conservation reserves, land in proximity to existing housing for exploration, but more particularly mining, land within 100m of recorded Aboriginal historic heritage features, and land within 100m of land that’s vested in the Water Authorities.

And so you can see in the north there’s a whole lot of land that’s sort of shaded quite, a little bit more lightly than the rest of it, that’s representing the irrigation channels and drainage structures that are quite pervasive through that irrigation area, so there’s an intensity of infrastructure in that space.

And very important to point out as well, that under other regulation or other legislation apart from the MRSDA, Aboriginal and historic heritage features whether they’ve been recorded or not, may not be disturbed without the appropriate permissions, really important, because that provides protection of those features from potential exposure to exploration subsequent mining activity.

And so you can see different levels, the green highlighting the least exposed, and that’s an area of national park which is adjacent to but not within the ground release area.

And then you’ve got various others, and the majority of the area is agricultural land which is fully available for exploration subject to the sort of normal planning constraints.

I guess when Lake Eppalock fills it might be difficult to do some aspects of exploration, particularly from a ground perspective, but at the moment there’s plenty of freeboard in Lake Eppalock as well.

[Slide: Sensitivity to exploration]

Sensitivity to exploration, I guess that’s, you know, what is the sensitivity of those features to hazards that may be associated with the activities.

We looked at these categories, so displacement or disruption of the existing land use.

So would vegetation be disturbed, and not so much for exploration but for mining for example, would the existing agricultural land use be disturbed?

Would it have an effect on the recreational amenity or the cultural value of the place?

Is there opportunity for the contamination of land, water or air?

Would it create noise that would disturb those features?

Would it create geotechnical hazards associated with the movement of rocks or soil?

Would there be changes in the surface water or groundwater conditions?

So, would there be dewatering for example, or other influence on surface water flows because lands contained within a structure that sort of diverts flows?

And would the activity use or infrastructure, you know for example energy infrastructure, and so compete with other uses or water infrastructure?

And so the exploration was carried out, looking separately at exploration carried out under the code, of practice for low impact exploration as well as more intensive activities that might be covered by a work plan, and as you can see, uniformly across the area, not a particularly discriminatory map, but uniformly across the area a very low sensitivity?

And you can see on the graph below some difference in the sensitivity depending on the kinds of hazard for exploration as well.

Mining would have a greater level of sensitivity.

So we looked at the effectiveness of regulatory controls, and the types of things that we consider in that process was the process to gain planning consent either through an EIS or other kind of process, the requirement to comply with the code or work plan, the provision of compensation, access payments, or offsets for environmental effects, the requirement to rehabilitate land post disturbance.

[Slide: Effectiveness of regulatory controls]

The fact that there is a water allocation framework and markets that govern the requirement if there is a requirement, to use and extract water for a mining activity as well as heritage legislation applicable to Aboriginal and historic features.

[Slide: Impact assessment result]

That all came together, added together into an overall assessment of potential impacts that considered exposure, sensitivity, and the regulatory control framework.

And you can see some variability, again much of it associated with the sort of places where exposure is affected, low vulnerability in those places like national parks where mining cannot, or exploration cannot occur, others where you’ve got protections because of the kind of space that they’re in.

And very little difference between those two phases of the exploration, either conducted under a code or a work plan, reflecting similar levels of exposure.

The regulatory framework operates effectively in both cases.

And generally speaking, exploration activity is a relatively small scale, short in duration, and so that, particularly relevant to mining, and so that reduces the overall sensitivity.

[Slide: Land inventory and assessment project outputs]

And the final slide is the outputs of that process.

So we have a final project report, which as Fiona said, is available to you.

There are the datasets, and there’s the block summary which is part of the tender documentation.

So the intent is that this would be a resource that, to the extent that you’re interested, is available for you to use as a part of your endeavours.

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