

Submission to the Productivity Commission – Resources Regulation

John Anderson

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The Author

John Anderson is a South Australian geologist and minerals explorer who over 43 years has worked on multiple commodities and in all Australian State's and the Northern Territory including around and within many of the country's major mining centres. He has also travelled extensively to visit mines and exploration programs in Europe, Africa and across the Americas.

He applied new concepts and lead teams in the discoveries of several diverse deposits in South Australia (Angas, Mindarie, White Dam, Paris) that developed an understanding of the under-explored opportunities and new ideas that can be applied to revitalizing the State's discovery potential.

Those concepts were recently applied in assisting the DeepSightX team from the Australian Institute for Machine Learning at the University of Adelaide in achieving second prize for the OZ Minerals Explorer Challenge at Prominent Hill.

John is currently:

- Mineral Discovery Consultant with Austrike Resources Pty Ltd
- Chair – Advisory Board for the Institute for Minerals and Energy resources

Formerly:

- General Manager Exploration (Australia & Africa) - Mount Isa Mines 1998 - 2002
- Managing Director – Investigator Resources Ltd 2007 – 2018
- President – South Australian Chamber of Minerals and Energy 2000 - 2001
- Member – State Ministers Minerals & Energy Advisory Council 2015 - 2019

Foreword

I was attending the IMARC convention in Melbourne today when I heard Minister Canavan deliver a strong address in which he mentioned the Resource Inquiry with which I was not aware. I have been putting a lot of thought into how South Australia can improve its exploration efficiencies and rate of discovery for new mineral resources. As tomorrow is the closing date for submissions, I am making one particular point for consideration of how Australia can more quickly identify new resources.

With the surface currently stressed for our iconic agriculture and pastoral industries, Australia is seeking to develop more opportunities in its other dimension. Above ground, Solar/Wind Energy, Defence & Space initiatives are achieving community recognition while the Minerals Industry suffers the headwinds of unwarranted socio-political resistance.

The discovery and development of the Country's mineral and energy resources beneath the surface is as much a frontier and just as innovative and exciting as any micro-satellite or energy from deep space communicating the universe's past. Geology is also frozen time that created the materials required to make the drones and rockets. The world's technological advancement will not be without minerals or fuels. We need new resource opportunities to competitively fund our part in the global transition to a greener & safer future.

Australia is blessed with a strong minerals pedigree and mining heritage. Contrary to misconceptions, our Country is not mature in exploration nor mining and we have not yet reached our full potential as a Mining Nation.

Collaborative campaigns such as Uncover, CRC-MINEX and locally tailored State programs are addressing the technical challenges to revitalizing the nation's discovery rates. These are not addressed here.

The Opportunity

The other opportunity identified here is to consider changes to tenement regulation including reduction of tenement sizes & terms; stratification of tenements to different commodities and/ or target depths. Different sized companies often seek to discover deposits of different size, depth and types in the same area. There are examples of large companies holding ground and taking considerable time in locating the large deposits of certain styles that they assume only occur at substantial depth. The testing for shallower deposits of either smaller size or different style and signatures is delayed, possibly by decades.

With a minerals system approach, the potential for new styles of shallow deposits can be identified and made available for testing by the tenement holder, or if not forthcoming, by the government or a new explorer introduced under joint venture or stratified tenure.

As a seasoned explorer who has managed and valued tenement portfolios, I understand the challenges of establishing and managing such an expeditious tenement scheme. No specific recommendations are made here, but the aspirational goal is proposed for thought by the tenement regulators. Having said this, State regulation and promotion should be maintained to ensure a competitive framework across the Country.

Another aspect that should be considered is a more accessibility for scientific investigations including strategic government drilling with exploration tenements and other land rights.

Necessary step-changes in Australia's discovery rates may equally come from innovative disruption in tenement regulation as from breakthrough research & geoscience concepts.

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