

Mineral and Energy Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Committee Secretary
Clean Economy Jobs, Resources and Transport Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane QLD 4000
By email: cejrtc@parliament.qld.gov.au

RE: Mineral and Energy Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Dear Committee Secretary

On behalf of Heritage Minerals, please accept this submission on the *Mineral and Energy Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024* ("the Bill").

With funding and finance support of the Queensland and Australian Governments and close engagement with Rockhampton Regional Council, Heritage Minerals is progressing the Mount Morgan Tailings Processing and Rehabilitation Project.

When the mine closed in the 1980s, it left both a rich legacy – as, for example, the foundation for BP as well as the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute, and decades of wealth and job creation symbolised by sandstone buildings in Rockhampton's Quay Street and southern capitals – and ongoing adverse environmental consequences.

Over the last several years, as we move ever closer to financial close on our project, Heritage Minerals has benefitted enormously from the opportunity to work closely and constructively with the Department of Resources, which has managed the Mount Morgan mine through its Abandoned Mines Program. Heritage Minerals welcomes the recognition of the Department through a recent Premier's Award for Excellence.

The operation of a Financial Provisioning Scheme, from 1 April 2019 under the provisions of the *Mineral and Energy Resources (Financial Provisioning) Act 2018*, has acted to ensure current and future mine operations do not pose a risk to the environment and the State's finances, and to provide a structured approach for industry to proactively manage rehabilitation and contribute to a dedicated Fund. Heritage Minerals welcomes these additional protections for mine rehabilitation.

Interestingly, as part of the establishment of the Scheme, the Government made provisions for the Fund to be able to contribute to the Abandoned Mines Program.

Since then, the Queensland Government has also worked to explore opportunities – with the advent of new technologies and new practices to recover minerals from these abandoned

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mines, particularly for their use in advanced manufacturing and clean energy technologies.

In 2022, the Government's Queensland Resources Industry and Development Plan (QRIDP) committed to recommendations:

- 7. Re-commercialising abandoned mine pilot program
- 8. Establish abandoned mines re-commercialisation principles

Recommendation

The MEROLA Bill provides the opportunity to enhance the Queensland Government's 2018 objectives to not only prevent future abandoned mines, but its QRIDP ambitions to commercialise those historic abandoned mines.

The Scheme, as it currently operates, in fact requires those undertaking rehabilitation and resource recovery at abandoned mines to contribute financially, either through a surety or a bond, to the Scheme despite the intent of their project being to remedy the historical failures in mine closure.

Specifically, Heritage Minerals urges the Committee to consider how the Scheme can be amended to incentivise the re-commercialisation of abandoned mines to not only create new wealth and employment, but to reduce environmental risk and the financial burden of the State. It would be a perverse outcome if the financial requirement of the Scheme imposed on proponents – who may be armed with either new technology or techniques to rectify past failings – cannot apply these to abandoned mine projects.

For instance, Section 27 of *Mineral and Energy (Financial Provisioning Scheme) Act 2018* could be amended to require the Scheme Manager in the allocation of an "initial risk category" for the project to consider whether the project is in fact a "rehabilitation activity".

To affect this change, a new Section 27(2)(a)(iv) regarding whether the resource project is a rehabilitation activity, under the *Mineral Resources Act 1989*, Section 344B(1)(c) could be inserted into the Act.

A corresponding amendment to the Mineral Resources Act – a new 344B(1)(c) as the definition of "rehabilitation activity" – could be 344(1)(c) for the resource recovery and rehabilitation activities approved under an agreement with the Department.

Heritage Minerals urges the Committee to propose amendments to the Bill to use the Financial Provisioning Scheme to not only prevent the repeat of the occurrence of new abandoned mines, but to further incentivise the commercialisation of existing abandoned mines.

Sincerely



Craig Wilson
Director - Corporate Affairs
Heritage Minerals Pty Ltd

