



7 September 2018

Angela Elder
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Department of Premier and Cabinet
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By email: AboriginalPolicy@dpc.wa.gov.au

Dear Angela

An Office for advocacy and accountability in Aboriginal affairs in Western Australia

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the *Discussion Paper – An Office for advocacy and accountability in Aboriginal affairs in Western Australia*.

The Association of Mining and Exploration Companies (AMEC) is the peak national industry body representing hundreds of mining and mineral exploration companies and service providers throughout Australia, the majority of which have project interests in Western Australia.

Each of these companies has direct contact with Aboriginal people throughout the State in relation to the operations of the *Native Title Act*, and the *Aboriginal Heritage Act* to ensure fair, equitable and quality negotiated outcomes and benefits for Aboriginal people, governments and industry. We therefore have an interest in the proposal to establish an Office for advocacy and accountability in Aboriginal affairs.

We note the intent is *'to avoid duplicating the work of other agencies, and focus on the activities where it can be most effective'*¹. It is unclear on whether the role of the Office will intersect the activities of Prescribed Bodies Corporate and Native Title Representative Bodies, particularly in relation to Agreement making, heritage clearances and associated matters.

There are still large areas of land in Western Australia which have never been explored, or are under explored. The economic and social dividend opportunities to Aboriginal people and regional communities is still considerable as the State has not maximised its resource potential. This can be to significant advantage to Aboriginal people and for all stakeholders. We therefore welcome the proposal that the office will *'promote strengths and opportunities, such as economic developments.'*²

¹ Discussion Paper - Page 10

² Discussion Paper – Page 11

Association of Mining and Exploration Companies

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We support the proposal that *'long term reform will be strengthened by a robust accountability framework'*³ This is critically important to ensure better outcomes for Aboriginal people, noting also that the mining and mineral exploration sector makes significant financial and non-cash contributions to entities established for that purpose.

The Discussion Paper suggests that a permanent dedicated entity with statutory powers, independence from Government, and report directly to Parliament could enhance the current system⁴. However, the Paper does not provide further detail on the nature and extent of the powers of the Office, and what public policy settings it may become involved with.

We would welcome the opportunity to provide further comment as the concept is developed.

Yours sincerely



Warren Pearce
Chief Executive Officer

³ Discussion Paper – Page 9

⁴ Discussion Paper – Page 3