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Mineral Resources Division  
Department for Energy and Mining  
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### ***The Future of Opal Mining at Mintabie***

The Outback Communities Authority is a statutory authority established by the *Outback Communities (Administration and Management) Act 2009*. It has a responsibility to provide for efficient and accountable administration and management of outback communities and to promote participation of outback communities in their administration and management. Its functions include articulating the views, interests and aspirations of outback communities.

Mintabie is located within the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) lands and as such does not fall within the jurisdiction of the Outback Communities Authority. The nearby township of Marla, on the other hand, is a community supported by the Outback Communities Authority. The Outback Communities Authority generally supports the findings of the **2017 Review of the Mintabie Lease and Mintabie Township Lease Agreement** (the Report). It is however, concerned about the possible impact on the Marla community should Mintabie and the Mintabie Precious Stones Field be closed.

With this in mind, the Outback Communities Authority makes the following submission in respect to the ***Call for Submissions – The Future of Opal Mining at Mintabie***.

The Outback Communities Authority notes the Report. In particular, recommendation 1 “*The Mintabie township be closed as soon as practicable...*” And recommendation 2 “*The Minister for Mineral Resources and Energy assess the impacts of revoking the proclamation of the Mintabie Precious Stones Field...*”

Whilst it is generally thought the closure of the Mintabie Precious Stones Field (MPSF) of itself will have little impact on the neighbouring community such as Marla, the roll on effect to Mintabie (township) and subsequently Marla could be detrimental if not properly managed.

#### **Refuse**

The Report states “*the Review Panel estimate that the cost of the clean-up of all sites in the Mintabie Township could be in the vicinity of \$2-3m*”. Marla is the closest household waste refuse site. The Marla Refuse facility is managed by the Marla & Districts Progress Association (MDPA) largely on a volunteer basis with limited available funds.

**The Outback Communities Authority is concerned an influx of refuse from Mintabie into the Marla site could cripple the proper management of the site. The Minister should ensure care is taken to prevent the use of the Marla site in a Mintabie clean up.**

#### **Policing**

The Outback Communities Authority agrees with the finding of the Report that Police numbers in Marla are variable and dependant on staff availability. We note there is, from time to time, periods when there are no personnel based in Marla. The reliance on Coober Pedy Police is not acceptable as it exists.

**The Outback Communities Authority considers any increase in population at Marla brought about from an exodus from Mintabie will exacerbate any issues relating to drugs and alcohol currently known about at Mintabie. The Minister should take into consideration the limited ability to police in Marla.**

### Schooling

The Marla school was closed several years ago. There are now no education facilities at Marla. It is understood that several children travel to Mintabie to attend the school there. Despite student numbers at Mintabie dropping in recent times, there will be an urgent need for alternative arrangements to be made to ensure education opportunities are not lost.

**The Outback Communities Authority recommends the Minister considers the education of remote and isolated children and takes steps to ensure parents are not forced to send their children out of the area to complete their education.**

### Town Management

State Government agencies are not well represented in Marla. Most of the Marla municipal services are managed by the MDPA through funding derived from the Outback Communities Authority, association subscriptions and fund raising ventures.

**The Outback Communities Authority asks that the Minister notes its concerns that even a modest increase in population will place an unreasonable burden on volunteer groups such as the MDPA.**

### Planning

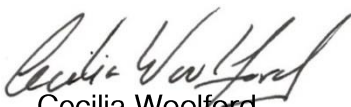
The Outback Communities Authority is of the opinion that there is, at present, insufficient ability within the States Planning processes to ensure logical and appropriate development in Marla. Nor is there sufficient ability to police and/or remediate sprawling and unsightly use of land. The Report notes "*Mintabie township is an untidy village, with many abandoned, derelict structures across the landscape. Numerous car bodies, general rubbish and disused mining equipment add to the need for a significant (expensive) remediation program*".

**The Outback Communities Authority has serious concerns that the closure of the MPSF could exacerbate the departure of residents, some of whom are likely to take up residence in Marla. The Minister should be aware that this has the potential of simply transferring the problem to Marla.**

The Outback Communities Authority trusts these matters will be taken into consideration when The Minister for Mineral Resources and Energy assesses the impacts of revoking the proclamation of the Mintabie Precious Stones Field.

Should you need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact Mark Sutton on 0427 001 969 or [mark.sutton@sa.gov.au](mailto:mark.sutton@sa.gov.au).

Yours sincerely



Cecilia Woolford

CHAIR

Outback Communities Authority