

MINTABIE PRECIOUS STONES FIELD SUBMISSION 2018

Mintabie Precious Stones Field is located on Yankunytjatjara land within the APY Lands. Situated off the Stuart Highway 32 kilometres west of Marla Township.

MPSF was once the largest producer of opal of Australia from 1983-89 in terms of value. The greatest volume of production still comes from Coober Pedy.

My name is Rosemary Lester and I am a traditional owner from that area of land surrounding the MPSF. I returned to the area in 1991. My 4 children attended the Marla District School and later that closed because of a drop in numbers and then transferred to Mintabie Area School.

I have witnessed the population of the Mintabie residents decline over the years because of depleted Opal potential and the Opal run has been mined thoroughly during 1986-90.

Miners had some large strikes and as it became known there was always a steady flow of prospectors registering claims and having a go.

MPSF has been extended on two occasions.

Shift to Seven Waterhole Lambina

Around 1996 an Agreement between Yankunytjatjara Council and South Australian Opal Miners Association Inc. was made enabling opal mining on the Lambina Pastoral Lease. The Agreement was the first Land Use Agreement under the Native Title Act 1991.

This was an opportunity to move to new ground to be prospected and mined for opal. Many miners from Mintabie and a handful from Coober Pedy registered claims on the new area and commenced

building makeshift camps only (similar to the arrangement at Mintabie.

Water was carted from a water point and miners had access to fill and take to their camps. Heavy machinery was shifted from Mintabie.

Again several miners had some good strikes until inevitably the opal became scarce.

The field remained until the Agreement was cancelled.

FACTORS AFFECTING MINING INDUSTRY

Another factor which had an effect on the mining dynamics of the Opal Industry was the introduction of GST and the event of 9/11. The 9/11 event caused a decline in value of opal. The Global Financial crisis caused a shift in markets and had an obvious effect on the numbers of miners and hobby miners.

Following those factors SA Department of Mines Energy as an efficiency and effective exercise relocated the Registration office to Marla. A half way location to Lambina and Mintabie.

A huge rise in fuel costs aswell had an impact on mining.

ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS

The risks of leaving the MPSF should be considered thoroughly. We DO NOT WANT TO SEE A FATALITY.

In 2000 whilst walking around the living lease I fell down a Caldwell hole I broke the fall by catching my 18 month old sons head saving him and breaking the fall.

I therefore strongly advocate for the MPSF should be closed and backfilled to make it safe for Anangu and livestock in the future. It should also be backfilled because of dust control and silica being blown in the atmosphere.

In 1953 the Emu and Maralinga Atomic Testing fallout came through Mintabie. Eye witness accounts testify that the slick oily substance stuck to the trees and fell on the top soil.

I strongly advocate believe the MPSF needs to be revegetated. During the mining processes the soil would have been moved and particles made airborne.

Oil and fuel spills should also be cleaned up.

The land should be returned to traditional owners in the original state before the mining commenced.

Leaving the MPSF open will be unnecessary as the field is depleted.