

threat to Australia's overseas standing arising from the attack by Pauline Hanson and other Parliamentarians on the reconciliation aspects of native title legislation. According to him, the Mabo decision was seen as 'a sign that Australia has finally shed its racist and discriminatory heritage... For those close observers of the local scene, such developments as the reconciliation process, the engagement with Asia and the promotion of multiculturalism all point in the same direction. This reassessment has been of profound importance and more significant than many of the more deliberate Australian actions on the world stage.'

The question of how Australians should respond to the facts of our history was raised by the Prime Minister in his Sir Robert Menzies lecture on 18 November. He raised the question of guilt, and whether living Australians are responsible for the past, lamenting that 'some of the curricula go close to teaching children that we have a racist, bigoted past.'

Noel Pearson, former Chairman of the Cape York Land Council responded by stressing that the Mabo judgement is based on the contemporary view of Australian history which incorporates Aboriginal people. He stated that while Mabo has thrown the country into social, political and social turmoil, this in his view is a necessary part of redressing the legacy of the past. Pearson emphasised that there have been considerable borrowings between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians, and that Aboriginal people are not urging guilt on the Australian people. He reiterated Paul Keating's words at Redfern Park in December 1992: 'Down the years there has been no shortage of guilt but it has not produced the responses we need. Guilt is not a very constructive emotion. I think that what we need to do is open our hearts a bit. All of us.'

Pearson's warning is that if the Government's amendments to the native title legislation succeed, 'the spirit of compromise and moral reckoning which Mabo represents will be lost to us and to future generations.'

[Go back to contents](#)

CLAIMS

NSW

Crescent Head [NNTT Ref# NC#94/5]

The NSW Government will pay Crescent Head Aborigines some an initial \$738,000 in compensation as part of Australia's first successful mainland native title application. The outcome, which was a mediated solution, involves the Dhungutti people allowing partial development of 12.4ha of land in return for compensation for the Government's sale of the land without establishing whether native title existed over it (*CM, 10 October, p5*).*

Justice French said that the two years taken to resolve the Crescent Head claim was speedy compared with experiences in New Zealand and Canada (*Newcastle Herald, 10 October, p6*).

Debra Jopson, writing in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, took a detailed look at the history of the case, recording among other things the shift of attitudes in the non-Aboriginal residents' association after the release of linguistic, archaeological and historical evidence in support of the claim. Linguist Amanda Lissarrague was able to prove that the Dhungutti language has remained substantially the same in 1994 as recorded in the late 19th and early 20th centuries; middens, a ceremonial bora ground and a stone-built fish trap remain; and the Crescent Head land had been used for camp sites from 1900 - 1956 (*SMH 11 October, p15*).

[Go back to contents](#)

VIC

Yorta Yorta [NNTT Ref#VC94/1]

The Yorta Yorta people's claim to 4,000 sq km of Crown land, containing the Barmah State Forest; compensation for 16,000 sq km of land lost to freehold title; and for native title rights to assist in the management of water in the Murray, Ovens, Goulburn and Edward Rivers and their tributaries, began in the Federal Court on 8 October. The claim, centred on closely populated valleys in the two most populated States, and on rights over water and irrigation, has created a climate of the major parties seeking to create legal precedents from the case (*Aus, 8 October, p11*).

A range of 12 existing licences, such as for grazing, water pumping and wood cutting are under question in the case. Nervous industry groups fear a Yorta Yorta victory could mean the end of grazing and logging on Crown land, and increased costs for water which is vital to the region's agricultural sector. The case is expected to last more than 2 years, and to end in the High Court (*HS, 2 October, p18*).

The Victorian Premier, Jeff Kennett, said that his Government would contest the Yorta Yorta claim to avoid setting a precedent for governments to settle native title claims out of court (*HS, 4 October, p10*).

Mr Brian Keon-Cohen, opening the case for the Yorta Yorta, said that the claim would raise legal issues not hitherto determined in the Federal Court or any other court. The Yorta Yorta claim is contested by more than 500 respondents, including the Victorian and NSW governments, the Murray Darling Basin Commission, local government authorities and timber, grazing and farming interests (*Aus, 9 October, p2*).

Justice Howard Olney has permitted the Yorta Yorta Aboriginal community to videotape Federal Court hearings of its native title claim on condition that the recordings not interrupt proceedings and that sound recordings cannot be broadcast without court permission before the proceedings end. Mr Lew Griffiths, who will help make the recording, said the Yorta Yorta feel a deep connection with their history and wanted it to live beyond the hearings in documentaries, education and touch-screen displays at cultural centres (*Age, 28 October, pA4*).

Monica Morgan outlined the Yorta Yorta's broad vision in relation to water and the environment- water releases along the Murray to be deregulated to benefit the ecosystem; greater impetus to clean up the

Murray; Crown land to be accessible to all; and irrigation and community water supplies to continue. In response to local farmers' fears that the Yorta Yorta may seek to impose charges for irrigation, she denied that Aborigines want compensation for water (*Weekly Times*, 30 October, p15).

Prominent businessman John Elliott, who has a large property near Echuca, described the Yorta Yorta claim as absurd. The Yorta Yorta chose not to respond, and continued with the process of showing Justice Olney sites in the area, such as a paddock which was the site of a protected station for Aborigines some 140 years ago, a burial ground, rock well and scarred trees (*Age*, 31 October, pA7).

Evidence of continuity of traditional knowledge among the Yorta Yorta through a system of elders responsible for upholding tribal laws and passing on oral history, spiritual law and administration of traditional medicines to future generations has been heard. An elder, Frances Mathyssen, gave evidence concerning a dispute involving three tribal groups whose remains are scattered through the Barmah Forest, the totems of the group, and medicines still in use by the people (*Herald Sun*, 30 October, p14).

The effect on Yorta Yorta rights to land of a succession of cattle leases since the 1940s has yet to be heard (*WAus*, 2 November, p7).

[Go back to contents](#)

QLD

Mt Isa [NNTT Ref# 96/104]

The Kalkadoon Dancers, acting on behalf of the Kalkadoon people, have lodged a native title claim over a large area of north-west Queensland including the city of Mt Isa. The area is west of Cloncurry, and includes parts of the Cloncurry, Burke, Mort and Hamilton Rivers (*DT*, 9 November, p28).*

[Go back to contents](#)

Yirrganydji [NNTT Ref#QC 95/6]

Leasehold title, due to expire in 2030, to Double Island in far north Queensland has been sold to a private investor. The Yirrganydji people last November claimed native title rights to assist in the protection and controlled use of the lands and waters of the island, as part of their overall claim to an area through the Cairns and Douglas Shire Councils and offshore from Port Douglas to False Cape (*Fin R*, 7 October, p32).

[Go back to contents](#)

Gungarri [NNTT Ref#QC96/1]

Queensland National Party Senator Bill O'Chee has claimed that notices

issued by the National Native Title Tribunal to graziers subject to native title claims in south-west Queensland were misleading and could jeopardise their property rights. Senator O'Chee stated that the notices were misleading in that they present the Gungarri native title claim as not conflicting with graziers' title and existing rights when the Gungarri claim is 'to be entitled as against the whole world to possession, occupation, use and enjoyment of the claimed land (*Media Release, 5 November*).

[Go back to contents](#)

WA

Miriuwung Gajerrong Claim [NNTT Ref #WC 94/2]

In handing down his decision on WA Government appeals against NNTT rulings, Federal Court Justice Malcolm Lee upheld the NNTT's decision that the WA Government should not have put the proposed licence to Carnegie Minerals and Pecan Holdings on the fast track process because sites of significance were involved. Justice Lee ordered the WA Government to pay costs and the companies to negotiate with the Miriuwung Gajerrong (*WA, 19 November, p10*).

[Go back to contents](#)

Peel Claim [NNTT Ref#WC96/100]

A third claim over the Peel area has been lodged by the Peel Region Nyoongah people in order to protect the large number of sites in the area. The claim extends from Garden Island, south to Mayalup, east to the southern tip of Harvey and north to Bedforddale (*Sunday Times, 27 October, p44*).

[Go back to contents](#)

Cape Mentelle Claim [NNTTRef#WC96/106]

Ken Colbung has lodged a native title claim to a large area of the south-west, from Cape Mentelle near Margaret River east to Broomehill and south-east to Groper Bluff near Bremer Bay. The claim, which at 13 November had not been accepted by the NNTT, is the third in the Leeuwin area (*WA, 13 November, p54*).

[Go back to contents](#)

NT

Darwin Claim [NNTTRef#DC96/1-7]

The Dangbala clan has lodged the first native title applications over areas

of inner city Darwin, including Myilly Point, Stuart Park and Mindil Beach. Mr Quail said there was no ambit claim and no intention to stop development plans in any of the areas, but his aim was to protect the land under claim or gain compensation for its use (*NTN, 23 October, p4*).*

The editor of *The Northern Territory News* considers the native title claim over Darwin and concludes that it borders on the mischievous and damages the cause of other more genuine claims. The editor believes that native title should be annulled by the fact that Darwin is a city (*NTN, 24 October, p8*).

[Go back to contents](#)

NATIVE TITLE AMENDMENTS

Speaking in relation to Pauline Hanson's maiden speech in the House of Representatives, Prime Minister Howard said that although he thought that some of what Hanson said was an accurate reflection of what people feel, he disagreed with her in believing that Aborigines are an advantaged group. He also reiterated his intention to amend the Native Title Act to prevent it stopping legitimate development (*Mer, 1 October, p8*).

The Prime Minister told the Liberal Party in Perth that existing native title legislation is unreasonably and unfairly hampering necessary development, not only in WA, but in other States. He criticised the Keating Government's legislation as insensitive to the position of WA with its enormous resource sector and high proportion of Crown land (*WA, 2 October, p5*).

Nigel Wilson, writing for *The Australian*, stated that 'reinstatement' of the threshold test to obtain the right to negotiate native title claims was the key component of the Government's proposed amendments to the NTA. This component according to Wilson reflected mining industry claims that existing legislation does not eliminate overlapping claims or applications with no chance of succeeding (*Aus, 3 October, p3*).

The Howard Government is seeking to use the NTA amendments to impose controls it unsuccessfully tried to place on Aboriginal organisations generally, on the functions, funding and finances of representative bodies. The Government is also proposing amendments giving the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs power to intervene in claims, decide on claims, and remove the right to negotiate from major infrastructure projects (*Age, 9 October, pA6*).*

Crispin Hull in *The Canberra Times* discusses the Government's proposal to give the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs power to override native title in major development projects. He states that native title as a common law right is protected under the Constitution and cannot be taken away by the Government except under just terms (*CT, 9 October, p4*).

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Mick Dodson, criticised the Government for delivering to indigenous Australians a range of amendments which will erode their rights without making the NTA work better for anyone. He also criticised the proposals to increase Ministerial powers to intervene as completely undermining the

arbitration process (*Press Release, 9 October*).

Frank Brennan called on the Prime Minister to lead the nation in reconciliation, justice, and in working out a way of sharing this country. He warned that the Coalition parties risk destroying the common ground which has been won through negotiation with Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (*SMH, 9 October, p19*).

WA Greens Senator, Dee Margetts, criticised the announcement of amendments to the NTA despite the fact that talks between indigenous and industry groups had not concluded. Labor and the Greens made it clear that they wanted to postpone the parliamentary debate until next year to enable more meaningful consultation with Aboriginal people and to allow a Parliamentary Committee to consider the amendments (*Cairns Post, 10 October, p13*).

Senator Minchin, Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, said that the resolution of the Crescent Head claim does not reduce the need for amendments to the NTA to make it more workable. He said that the claim involved a relatively small area of Crown land and did not involve any issues relating to mining or exploration, yet had taken 2 years to negotiate, while numerous other claims lodged with the NNTT were much more complex. In his view there was a need for the Act to deliver 'more certainty' on native title matters (*Press Release, 10 October*).

The Sydney Morning Herald, reviewing the Crescent Head decision, said that it was an unfortunate co-incidence for the Federal Government that the settlement of the claim came on the same day as a Government Minister described the NTA as unworkable. The paper said that the basis of discussions on the amendments should be what can genuinely be done to speed up resolution of claims, without undermining the principles of the Act, rather than accepting extravagant claims that the Act is unworkable (*SMH, 11 October, p18*).

Senator Minchin rejected Lois O'Donoghue's assessment that the Government is unwilling to consult with Aborigines in an open and meaningful way on its proposed amendments to the NTA. Senator Minchin said that he has been consulting with indigenous people about the Native Title Act since March this year, and has received 42 submissions from indigenous groups (*Fin R, 18 October, p30*).

In their Press Release of 18 October on the Government's proposed amendments to the NTA, Indigenous representatives stressed the process of negotiation which went into the drafting of the original legislation, through which indigenous people made significant concessions to meet the interests of non-indigenous Australians. 'In effect, this was the first treaty between the indigenous owners and the commonwealth in the history of the non-indigenous occupation of this country and was a significant milestone in the development of this nation - something which the current Government now chooses to ignore.' (*Press Release, 18 October*).

Northern Land Council chairman Galarrwuy Yunupingu refused to attend meetings about native title in Canberra until the government demonstrated 'respect for, and a willingness to come to grips with, what native title means for Aboriginal people.' He said that native title 'is not just about pieces of whitefella paper, it is the customary law and customary system

which still governs us and gives us the rights to survive and live.' (*NTN*, 21 October, p14).

Speaking on behalf of Aboriginal leaders, the executive director of the Kimberley Land Council, Mr Peter Yu, said that the proposed changes to the NTA were unacceptable as the Government had failed to treat indigenous Australians as equals. Mr Yu said that native title is fundamentally the recognition of indigenous culture and rights, and that all Australians would oppose such an attack on their fundamental rights (*SMH*, 19 October, p5).

Aboriginal Legal Service chief executive Dennis Egginton warned that race relations were about to explode in Western Australia as a result of proposed watering down of native title legislation and inflammatory statements by politicians including Pauline Hanson. He said the Sydney 2000 Olympics would be targeted for disruption (*Sunday Times*, 20 October, p3).

The WA Premier, Mr Court, has warned that he will not proceed with plans to set up a State native title tribunal if the Howard Government's amendments to the NTA fail to pass Federal Parliament as a package. He said that if key features of the package are changed or not passed, the Act would remain unworkable and WA would not set up a tribunal in those circumstances (*Aus*, 28 October, p3).

Following the tabling by the Government of the Report of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Native Title, on the *NTA Amendment Bill 1996*, the Opposition and Democrats announced they would try to make the Government give legislative force to its promise that the proposed amendments will not breach the Racial Discrimination Act. Opposition spokesman on Aboriginal Affairs, Daryl Melham, criticised proposals to allow the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs to intervene to allow projects of economic importance, while Senator Kernot said that the changes were clearly designed to favour industry at the expense of Aborigines (*WA*, 19 November, p10).*

Opposition leader Kim Beazley told the National Farmers' Federation conference in Canberra that Labor would be able to support the Government's proposed amendments to the NTA provided the Government showed good faith. Mr Beazley said that the determination of native title could be made more workable without depreciating indigenous Australians' common law native title rights and without conflicting with the Racial Discrimination Act (*Townsville Bulletin*, 20 November, p11).

The Federal Government deferred the House of Representatives debate of the amendments to the NTA until February 1997. The decision was based on the deferred tabling of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Native Title report on the proposed amendments on 13 December, and the need to incorporate any of the Committee's recommendations into the Amendment Bill prior to debate in the House of Representatives (*Media Release*, 22 November).

State and Territory Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Ministers were briefed on the Federal Government's proposed NTA amendments at a meeting of the Ministerial Council for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (MCATSIA) in Adelaide on 22 November. Senator

Minchin, who conducted the briefing, stressed that some amendments, such as the proposed statutory regime for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative bodies and the recognition of indigenous land use agreements outside the current procedural requirements of the NTA, had been adopted for the benefit of indigenous interests as a result of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation talks (*Media Release, 22 November*).

ATSIC issued its response to the Government's proposed amendments to the NTA on 26 November. The document says that without substantial changes to the Government's proposals, the Act would become less workable, not more, and will result in an environment of mistrust, contention and increasing litigation (*CT, 27 November, p4*).

[Go back to contents](#)

MINING AND NATURAL RESOURCES

National

In its 1996 annual report, mining company WMC stated that its exploration expenditure within Australia has fallen while its overall exploration budget rose by 32%. The Company said that native title issues may cause a further reduction in its expenditure on exploration in Australia (*Aus, 1 October*).

Patrick Dodson, writing in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, states that Aboriginal communities have agreed to allow development to proceed while they await recognition of their native title rights. He said that in Western Australia almost 4,000 grants of mining tenements have been cleared without any requirement to negotiate with Aboriginal people. He blamed the WA Government's failure to negotiate in good faith under the NTA for generating anxiety and hostility, and creating long delays in the granting of mining leases across the State (*SMH, 11 October, p19*).

MIM Holdings Ltd chief executive Nick Stump warned that Australia must resist a 'drift to insecurity of land tenure' to ensure it kept its competitive edge in the mining sector. He expressed the view that security of tenure and native title are quite unrelated to the well-being of Aboriginal people (*CT, 23 October, p35*).

Mick Dodson, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, responding to an article by David Barnett in *The Financial Review*, states that indigenous Australians are not anti-development - more than 2,900 exploration and prospecting licences were issued in WA in accordance with the NTA up to January 30, 1996. What indigenous Australians insist on is that those native title rights which have survived over two centuries of dispossession be given equal protection to the property rights of other Australians (*Fin R, 11 November, p2*).

[Go back to contents](#)

NT

Coronation Hill

The sensitive issue of mining at Coronation Hill has resurfaced, with the Minister of Resources, Warwick Parer, saying he could see a time when it could go ahead. Mr Parer said it would depend on the future attitudes of the Jawoyn people and Newcrest Mining Company (*Age*, 11 October, pA4).

[Go back to contents](#)

Jabiluka

Aboriginal groups are seeking legal advice on ways to rescind the approval they granted 14 years ago to mine uranium at Jabiluka. The chairwoman of the Gundjehmi Aboriginal Corporation, Ms Yvonne Margarula, whose father gave permission for mining, said that she believed mining was poisoning water and fish on Mirrar Erre clan lands (*Aus*, 22 October).

[Go back to contents](#)

Energy Resources Australia

The Australian Conservation Foundation and Greens Senator Bob Brown dismissed a favourable Environmental Impact Study prepared by Energy Resources Australia for one of its own proposed uranium mines as a public relations exercise which glossed over the important issues. ACF executive director, Jim Downey, called for a full public inquiry into the mine (*Ad*, 12 October, p14).*

ERA, which needs the agreement of traditional custodians to truck ore from Jabiluka to Ranger mine for milling and processing, has warned Aboriginal land owners that if they took too long to agree to the proposal or rejected it, the company would pursue an alternative with greater environmental impacts. The alternative - to mill on the site - involves doubling the site area, and a five-fold increase in the water catchment (*CT*, 18 October, p17).

[Go back to contents](#)

Fishing

An agreement on dugong protection in the Borroloola area is being hailed as a model of the benefits of Aboriginal traditional owners and the commercial fishing industry negotiating over concerns about the marine environment. Northern Land Council Chairman, Galarrwuy Yunupingu, and NT Fishing Industry Council executive Officer, Ian Smith, jointly announced the strategy to minimise accidental capture of dugong in barramundi nets while retaining business viability (*Media Release November 7*).

[Go back to contents](#)

WA

In a discussion of the impact of the NTA on mining in WA, Janine MacDonald provides the following information: most of the Kimberley Land Council's 21 native title claims were made in response to State Government's notices of intention for mining or exploration; some 1000 mining leases, half of which are in the Goldfields, were subject to right to negotiate procedures. Ten mining leases have been issued after NNTT rulings, seven with conditions (*WA, 3 October, p11*).

Mining title holders will be responsible for native title compensation when mining titles are granted or worked under new legislative changes bringing WA into line with most other States. The Chamber of Minerals and Energy spokesman Simon Williamson said that miners were concerned that they would be exploring without knowing the level of compensation for which they could be liable or its timing (*WA, 7 November, p38*).*

A deal signed between RTZ-CRA Hamersley Iron and Pilbara Aborigines could deliver \$60 million in benefits to the Aborigines in return for development of the Yandicoogina mine. Approvals for mining have to go through native title procedures, but both parties are confident there will be no objections (*WA, 21 November, p47*).*

[Go back to contents](#)

QLD

Michael Pinnock, chief executive of the Queensland Mining Council, summarising the state of mining in Queensland, said the situation is confused with exploration speeding up, major new prospects identified, and the world market for coal soaring. He said on the other hand through native title legislation, access is blocked for new projects, mining leases have been delayed, and the issue of pastoral leases still has not been decided (*Fin R, 11 October, p75*).

[Go back to contents](#)

Pipeline Corridor

The Queensland Government is planning to acquire land by easement to develop an 800 km multi-user miscellaneous transport infrastructure (MTI) corridor from south- west Queensland to Mt Isa. The corridor is to be set up under s25 of the *Transport Planning and Co-ordination Act (1994)*. Native title rights, where they are found to exist, will be recognised and protected (*CM, 7 October, p18*).

[Go back to contents](#)

Ernest Henry

MIM Holding's Ernest Henry copper project in north-west Queensland reported it was approached by an Aboriginal group seeking \$120 million as compensation for land use, in return for no native title claim interference

to the mine or the supply of water or power. Mr Charles Perkins, consultant to the Mitakoodi Juhnjar Aboriginal Corporation, denied that this sum had been fixed; while Mr Colin Hardy, solicitor for the group, said that the people he represented were seeking royalties over Ernest Henry production as part of waking up to their rights (*Fin R, 18 October, p31*).*

Marcus Priest of *The Courier Mail* states that Mr Perkins' company, Sancave Pty Ltd, has an agreement with Aboriginal organisations in the north-west of Queensland to take a consultancy fee of 15% of any benefits the groups receive. A spokesman for Ernest Henry Mine said that native title no longer existed over the mine, as the mining lease had been issued in 1974, and that a new native title claim would not affect the right of EHM to mine the deposit (*CM, 18 October, p1*).*

Justice Doug Drummond on 18 October dismissed an application brought by the Kalkadoon Aboriginal dancers on behalf of the Kalkadoon people that the construction of a powerline to EHM would endanger Aboriginal sites (*CM, 19 October, p6*).

[Go back to contents](#)

Osborne

The Yullama and Kalkadoon people have lodged an application for native title over Placer Pacific's \$200 million Osborne copper-gold mine in north-west Queensland. The claim comes despite a controversial contractual agreement, from which some Kalkadoons claim to have been excluded, between the Kalkadoon Tribal Council and Placer, in which the KTC gave an undertaking not to make any native title claims over the mine, in return for small sums to be used for a scholarship and cultural and education initiatives (*Fin R, 23 October*).

[Go back to contents](#)

Korea Zinc

Queensland State Cabinet approved the Impact Assessment Study for the Korea Zinc refinery in Townsville. Cabinet also agreed to the drafting of enabling legislation to deal with special project requirements such as land rezoning and the exclusion of culturally sensitive areas (*Fin R, 1 October, p7*).

[Go back to contents](#)

Century Zinc Mine

Queensland government negotiator, Bill Hayden, travelled to the Gulf of Carpentaria where he held useful talks with Century Zinc and representatives of Aboriginal communities affected by the proposed mine. Following his visit, the National Native Title Tribunal appointed a team of 4 mediators, including Tribunal president, Justice French. Hayden stressed that he is not a mediator, but will meet with Justice French to discuss a co-ordinated approach (*CM, 1 October, p2*).*

Statements by Bill Hayden to the Carpentaria Land Council that he believed the Century Zinc mine would be environmentally safe, led to heckling on his recent trip to the Gulf (*Bulletin*, 8 October, p15).

The Queensland Premier, Rob Borbidge, said that he was happy with progress and was confident that Bill Hayden would reach a resolution with the other stakeholders by January. He said that it was the first time the right to negotiate provisions of the NTA have been exercised in Australia, so it was somewhat of a pioneering task (*CT*, 8 November, p13).

The parties engaged in the right to negotiate process under the NTA - RTZ'-CRA's Century Zinc Ltd, the Queensland Government and the 5 local Aboriginal groups affected by the mine were expected to lead submissions placed before mediators in early December (*Aus*, 25 November, p29).*

The Queensland Government on 25 November approved a \$30 million infrastructure package as an incentive in addition to the \$60 million package promised to Gulf communities by Century Zinc to get the development of the mine back on track (*FinR*, 26 November, p12).*

[Go back to contents](#)

SA

A report in *The Advertiser* states that the SA mining scene is marked by doubt and confusion, with some \$5m of exploration spending deferred and one overseas firm believed to have abandoned its program in the State. Although 5 Aboriginal groups have lodged claims over a northern exploration licence near Lake Froma and overlapping claims have been received from groups in Ceduna, Cooper Pedy and Port Augusta, company executives said that in most cases there had been constructive negotiations with Aboriginal groups over access to exploration areas (*Ad*, 9 November, p37).

A special report by Andy Williams, announcing the discovery of a major gold province in the Gawler Craton area in the north-west of South Australia casts a different light on the situation, stating that exploration for gold, copper, and petroleum is at record levels in SA. Most exploration in SA for minerals, oil and gas is on pastoral leases, and mining companies are waiting for the High Court decision on Wik on whether pastoral leasehold extinguishes native title, to gauge the extent to which they will need to negotiate with Aboriginal groups (*Sunday Mail*, 17 November, p40).

[Go back to contents](#)

GENERAL NATIVE TITLE ISSUES

National