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MEDIA RELEASE

MINERALS SECTOR WELCOMES VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT RECOMMENDATIONS TO SLASH RED TAPE

The Minerals Council of Australia (MCA) welcomes the recommendations of the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission contained in the draft report: Regulation and Regional Development – Challenges and Opportunities released today.

The report makes a range of recommendations including many that are critical to the development of the minerals industry in regional Victoria. These include a review of the native vegetation management framework; finalisation of many draft EPA guidelines; matching the rigour of environmental assessments to the environmental risks of the proposal; setting assessment and approval timelines; establishing interdepartmental agreements to streamline access arrangements for crown land; and the introduction of accurate performance measures to identify delays in licence approvals processes.

“The Commission’s findings are comprehensive and represent an important first step toward freeing up the regulatory environment in regional Victoria,” the executive director of the MCA (Victorian division), Chris Fraser said today.

“The commissioning of the report is an important reflection of the Victorian Government’s determination to streamline the business and regulatory environment. The critical test, however, will be the early implementation of the report’s findings,” he said.

“The minerals sector has much to offer regional and rural Victoria in terms of exploration, mining and mineral processing developments that meet the principles of sustainable development and in particular offer well-paid, highly skilled employment,” Mr Fraser said.

The \$3 billion minerals sector already accounts for approximately 7 per cent of the state economy, and employs more than 5200 Victorians, the majority in regional areas of the state.

In its submission to the Commission, the MCA estimated that overly onerous regulation was not only costly to the minerals industry but impedes the investment of hundreds of millions of dollars in regional and rural Victoria.

“The minerals sector does not enjoy and does not seek any special favours or treatment. Instead, the industry seeks a regulatory environment characterised by clarity, promptness and consistency in application,” Mr Fraser said.

“The minerals sector congratulates the Commission on its far reaching report and looks forward to working closely with the Victorian Government to realise its commitment to produce a business environment more conducive to expansion and growth,” Mr Fraser said.

Some of the problem areas highlighted by the MCA in its submission to the inquiry included :

- The absence of coordinated approvals processes for access to land for exploration, a shortcoming commonly resulting in long delays and unnecessary exclusions
- Overly complex, lengthy and unclear works approvals processes for exploration and mining projects
- Ad hoc, inconsistent and inequitable administration of environmental and planning regulation resulting in costly delays and excessively onerous and often arbitrary restrictions.

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