MINING REGISTRAR
GPO Box 3000
Darwin NT

FINAL REPORT

Exploration Licence 23171 (Delamere Air Weapons Range)

The above Exploration Licence was surrendered on 7 March 2005 because I could not get permission from the RAAF to enter the area. A copy of the RAAF letter explaining the danger is attached.

No exploration was carried out on the ground. The only exploration I carried out was examination of the aerial photographs and satellite imagery.

Yours Sincerely

3/3/05

D J Langley

CR.20050073
Mr D.J. Langley  
GPO Box 472  
BRISBANE QLD 4001

Dear Mr Langley

EXPLORATION LICENCE 23171 – POR 3413 – DELAMERE

Thank you for your letter dated 24 February 2004, discussing your plan for mining exploration at Delamere Air Weapons Range (DAWR). This letter is in response to your inquiry on the prevalence of ordnance in your specified area of exploration, notwithstanding your willingness to sign an indemnity release.

At present, staff at my headquarters are attempting to collate information on the dangers associated with any type of mining at DAWR. As a background, information available to my staff states that DAWR was gazetted as a Defence Practice Area (DPA) for air to surface and surface to surface weapons firing in Government Gazette 25 of 05 July 1989. Since that time, DAWR has been used extensively by the Royal Australian Air Force and visiting forces, being the only air weapons range in the region. A large volume of ordnance has been dropped at DAWR since opening. However, records of ordnance that has missed target or failed to detonate have only existed since 1995, as prior to this, a less reliable marking system was used. Ordnance dropped at DAWR includes 500 and 1000 pound bombs, missiles and other explosive devices. As has been mentioned, some of these remain unexploded in locations unknown to us. It is generally only by chance that staff at DAWR discover and subsequently detonate unexploded ordnance.

Although your area of exploration is contained within the buffer zone, nine kilometres from the DPA’s northern boundary, this in itself is no guarantee that your area of exploration will be free of ordnance, in particular, unexploded ordnance. On occasion, if ordnance released from an aircraft hits the ground at an unusual angle, it can, and has been known to skip up to seven kilometres before detonating or embedding into the ground. Subsequently, staff at DAWR have located unexploded ordnance up to 15 metres below surface level in areas outside the DPA, hence our desire to proceed cautiously with this matter. In addition, during 2004, DAWR will be subject to continued use given our seasonal time frames dictating use of the range and our heavy work commitments.

As a result of concerns on the dangers related to any type of mining exploration at DAWR, my staff are presently preparing a brief to the Northern Territory Department of Mines and Energy. This brief will highlight to the Department the potential dangers associated with any mining in the area, particularly in regards to the prevalence of unexploded ordnance at DAWR, and those associated with fragments and chemicals of exploded ordnance. The date for this presentation is yet to be confirmed. However, it is anticipated that it will be presented to the Department before the beginning of the dry season. Information regarding the outcome of this meeting will be passed onto you in due course.
I trust this information is of benefit to you. Should you have any further questions in relation to this matter, my point of contact is Flight Lieutenant John Magro on (08) 8973 6159.

Yours sincerely

C.A. METZ
Group Captain
Officer Commanding
322 Combat Support Wing
RAAF Base Tindal

16 March 04