

- 9 MAY 2012



MINISTER FOR NATURAL RESOURCES,
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Dr Grahame Webb
Chair
Environment Protection Authority
PO Box 496
PALMERSTON NT 0831

Dear Dr ^{grahame}Webb

I refer to the recent decision announced by the Minister for Resources that the Northern Territory Government has placed a moratorium on sea bed mining in the coastal waters of the Northern Territory.

The moratorium will be in place until 2015, while a comprehensive assessment is undertaken by the Environment Protection Authority on:

- the actual or potential impacts of such sea bed mining activities on the environment and other resource industries; and
- the methods for managing the impacts .

The purpose of this letter is formally refer this matter to the EPA pursuant to section 5B of the *Environment Protection Authority Act*.

In conducting inquiries and formulating advice on this matter, I request the Environment Protection Authority to consider the following when finalising the Terms of Reference.

The aim of the review will be to:

- identify the appropriate standards for acceptance by the Territory which will adequately address the needs of the community in respect of industry "best practice", protection of the environment, protection of social and cultural impacts, mitigation strategies and community involvement; and
- permit the development of regulations, guidelines, or both, for the assessment of applications (received but not assessed due to the moratorium and future applications) to ensure consistency of assessment procedures and appropriate determinations, taking into account the relevant factors.

I anticipate that the review will:

- examine practices adopted or applied in seabed mining both internationally and within Australia, and identify which of these are considered as environmentally best practices;
- identify the likely impacts of seabed mining on the environment and other resources, including commercial and recreational fishing, including identification of impacts which have occurred as a result of, or in association with, seabed mining; and
- examine the mitigation strategies that have or could be used to manage the impacts of sea based exploration and seabed mining on the environment and other resources.

The Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority, in association with relevant NT Government agencies has been separately asked to review appropriate measures to ensure the avoidance of sacred sites and protection of sacred sites as a part of any exploration and/or mining of seabed mineral resources. I ask the EPA to consult with Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority during the conduct of this review to ensure areas of common interest are appropriately factored into the EPAs advice.

My office is available to clarify any queries and in due course I look forward to receiving your advice on this important issue of sustainability in our coastal environments.

Yours sincerely



KARL HAMPTON

04 MAY 2012