

# Australian Geoscience Council Inc.

The Council of Earth Science Societies in Australia



7 Landsborough Street  
Griffith  
ACT 2603  
29 November 2001

The Hon. Robert John Carr, MP  
Premier of New South Wales  
Level 40, Governor Macquarie Tower,  
1 Farrer Place,  
Sydney, NSW 2000

Dear Premier

## **Proposed Transfer of 160 jobs in Mineral Resources from Sydney to Maitland**

I am writing on behalf of the Australian Geoscience Council regarding the proposed transfer of 160 jobs in the Mineral Resources Department from Sydney to Maitland.

The AGC comprises nine professional societies and associations, has a total membership of over 7000 and represents most of the geoscientists in Australia. A key aim of the AGC is to promote the geosciences in the best interests of both our constituent organisations and the Australian nation as a whole.

In this context we encourage governments to assist in developing healthy and competitive resource industries in Australia because of their vital contribution to the wealth of the nation. In particular we see the need to:

- 1. Increase mineral and petroleum exploration in Australia,*
- 2. Enhance the perception of and awareness of the geosciences in Australia, and*
- 3. Encourage geoscience research by federal and state governments, industry and the tertiary education sector.*

At a recent meeting of our Council several representatives from New South Wales raised the issue of your proposal to move the bulk of the Mineral Resources Department from Sydney to Maitland.

As far as we can ascertain from your media release, the main reason for the move is to bring more business to the Maitland area. Although this is a commendable outcome, we consider that the proposal, as it presently stands, could seriously diminish the effectiveness of the Department of Mineral Resources, and hence the development of the mineral resources in NSW, so that the overall outcome would not be beneficial.

The Geological Surveys and Resource Departments of all States and the Northern Territory are placed in capital cities because these are where the financial and information drivers are concentrated. We believe that if the DMR is moved away from Sydney, it will not be able to

maintain the impressive contribution it has made to both NSW and Australia over the last few years.

Although some of the data sets generated by the Department can be accessed remotely by electronic means, there is still a need to discuss prospectivity issues face-to-face, particularly when explorers are in the process of applying for Exploration Licences. For face-to face interactions, Sydney is much more convenient than Maitland because Sydney is the transport hub on NSW. If the bulk of the staff is moved to Maitland it will make it just that much harder for prospective explorers to develop viable prospects.

A move to Maitland will have adverse affects on the links between the Geological Survey and the tertiary institutions in Sydney. At present the close proximity of the Survey to the five Sydney universities is beneficial to all concerned. In Maitland, the Survey would be isolated, the intellectual contacts would be diminished, and there would be a risk of the geoscientists being professionally disadvantaged.

We consider that the Department of Mineral Resources is already well represented in regional centres with offices in Armidale, Broken Hill, Orange and Singleton. The benefits for a move from Sydney by most of those currently working at St Leonards have not been articulated in terms of positive overall outcomes for New South Wales.

We therefore recommend very strongly that the proposal be reconsidered, and at least be put on hold until a complete cost benefit analysis has been undertaken.

Yours sincerely

David Denham  
President

cc The Hon. Eddie Obeid, MLC  
Minister for Mineral Resources, and Minister for Fisheries  
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