

COVID-19 Mining, Exploration and Geoscience Policy

Mining, Exploration and Geoscience (MEG) acknowledge the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the NSW minerals industry and the wider community.

In April 2020, we implemented a policy in response to the pandemic and its impact on businesses, the resources industry, and the broader community in NSW. The policy has been updated to reflect the changing conditions since April 2020.

MEG will recognise the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on exploration in renewal applications

We recognise the Commonwealth and NSW Governments' response to managing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic introduced numerous restrictions throughout 2020 and 2021. The restrictions impacted the ability of some explorers to gain access to land, prospecting equipment and skilled personnel to carry out approved exploration programs.

Where explorers can demonstrate that COVID-19 has impacted their approved work programs, this will be accepted as a valid extenuating factor:

- for the renewals policy
- when considering special circumstances renewal.

We recognise COVID-19 has affected the usual right to negotiate processes under the *Native Title Act 1993* and prevented native title claimants and explorers from meeting to negotiate. MEG will consider this delay to be a valid extenuating factor under the renewals policy where the exploration licence holder has proactively communicated such an issue to the Department.

The above considerations will apply to work programs affected from March 2020 to April 2022. Applicants may be asked to provide evidence on the impacts experienced during this period.

Implementation and review

This renewed policy takes effect on 20 May 2022 and replaces the earlier COVID-19 policy response issued in August 2021, October 2020 and April 2020.

This policy will be reviewed in May 2023 or as needed.

The impact of COVID-19 on the community and the industry is evolving. MEG will continue to monitor the situation and work with stakeholders and representatives.

For further information

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