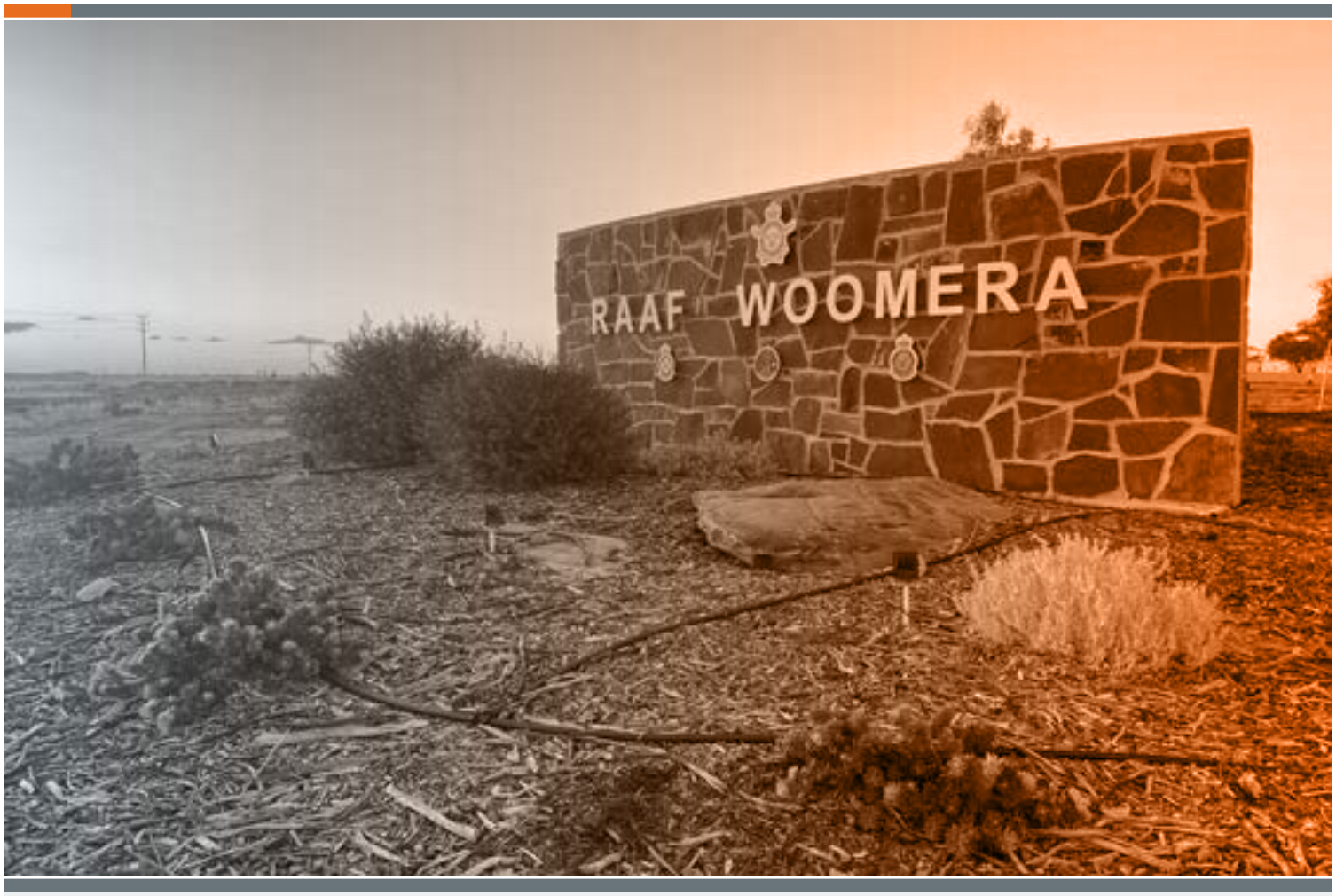
Australian Government
Defence

Woomera Prohibited Area Advisory Board

Annual Report 2021-2022



Acknowledgement of Country

We respectfully acknowledge the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara, Antakirinja Matu-Yankunytjatjara, Arabana, Gawler Ranges, Kokatha and Maralinga Tjarutja peoples, the traditional custodians of the lands upon which Defence operates within the Woomera Prohibited Area.

We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

We also acknowledge the service of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women who have contributed – and continue to contribute – to the defence of Australia and its national interests.

Image warning

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are advised that this document may contain images or content referring to deceased persons. It may also contain words or descriptions that are culturally sensitive.

Images

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Cover image:
Entrance sign to RAAF Base Woomera, located about 5 kilometres north of the Woomera Village. Officially designated in January 2015, the base coupled with the RAAF Woomera Test Range (WTR) comprise the Woomera Range Complex.

Woomera Prohibited Area Advisory Board

Annual Report 2021-2022

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Chair's Report

The Woomera Prohibited Area (WPA) Advisory Board recognises the effort the Commonwealth and South Australian (SA) Government makes to uphold the Coexistence Framework by working co-operatively to balance the WPA as a sovereign testing capability with the economic and cultural interests of stakeholders. Over the past year both governments worked to maximize opportunities for non-Defence users within the confines of a national security asset vital to Defence and our nation.

Throughout the reporting period, Defence worked collaboratively with stakeholders to conduct weapons tests and range upgrades. Despite COVID disruptions, Defence saw a marked increase in activities over the previous year to accommodate the testing and development of advanced drones and long-range missiles.

The Advisory Board acknowledges the strong and enduring connection First Nations people have to their land. Representatives from the Board met with four of the six corporate boards representing the WPA's First Nations groups, during which the importance of incorporating cultural heritage, land management and conservation practices into all WPA activities was emphasised. Defence has finalised a comprehensive Heritage Management Plan (HMP) for the WPA to deliver policies and processes that preserve historic, Aboriginal and natural heritage values. We look forward to meeting with the remaining Aboriginal corporate boards in the coming year.

The benefits of upholding co-existence in the WPA was highlighted during the SA floods, when Defence was able to work co-operatively with stakeholders to facilitate mining operations and undertake resupply missions to deliver food and supplies to tourists and locals stranded at Coober Pedy.

Defence, the SA Government and the resources sector also worked together to streamline opal mining licencing and develop a more efficient application process. The new permit system addresses a key recommendation from the 2018 Review of the WPA Coexistence Framework (2018 WPA Review) to modernise access arrangements and has received positive feedback for reducing the administrative burden.

The Advisory Board remains on track to implement the 2018 WPA Review's outstanding recommendations and the inaugural WPA Health Check affirmed the Coexistence Framework remains fit-for-purpose.

Noting such progress, more opportunities remain to enhance coexistence arrangements. To that end, the Advisory Board will continue to work with the Commonwealth and SA Government to strengthen stakeholder relationships, meet the needs of all WPA users and build upon the achievements and success of the Coexistence Framework.

Amanda Vanstone AO
Chair
Woomera Prohibited Area Advisory Board
December 2022

Woomera Prohibited Area at a glance

IMPLEMENTATION OF 2018 WPA REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS

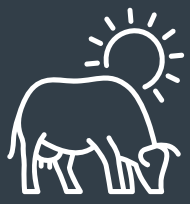
5 completed

7 in progress

Did you know?

80%

of the world's opal market comes from South Australia

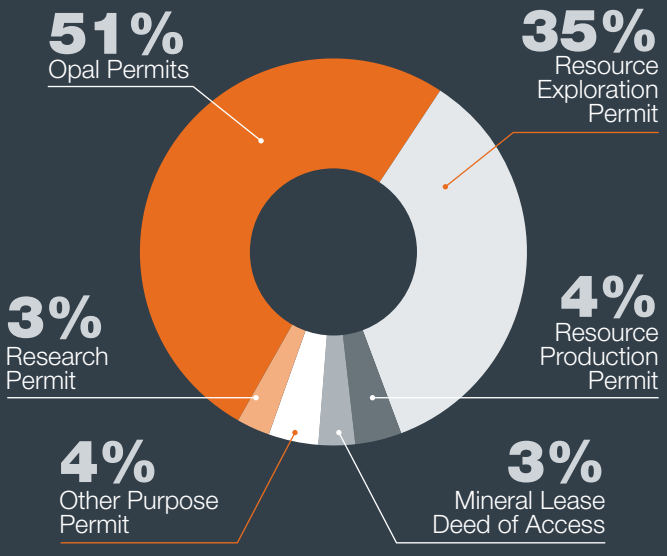


26 Pastoral Leases



6 Aboriginal Communities

PERMIT AND DEED HOLDERS IN THE WPA



$10.5m

for 52 proposals under the Accelerated Discovery Initiative, including 10 proposals for projects in the WPA.

ACCESS APPLICATIONS

1,131
Approved Person applications lodged

417
Escorted Person applications lodged

Finalised WPA Heritage Management Plan

Modernised the opal mining permit system

WPA Coexistence Framework

The WPA Coexistence Framework acknowledges the significant cultural heritage and economic value the WPA holds for a range of stakeholders. It ensures the WPA remains a vital strategic capability while preserving the heritage value and economic potential for stakeholders. Ultimately, it promotes the mutually beneficial use of the WPA in the national interest.



Kokatha Aboriginal Corporation discuss a hearth site and its cultural protection and management, near Rawlinson Hill.

WPA Advisory Board

Membership

The WPA Advisory Board is led by an independent Chair and Deputy Chair, and includes ex-officio members representing Air Force, the Department of Defence (Defence), the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources, the SA Department for Energy and Mining and Defence SA.

The Advisory Board's primary goal is to advise the Commonwealth and SA Government on leveraging coexistence for the benefit of all stakeholders. By proactively engaging with Aboriginal communities, the resources sector, environmental groups, pastoralists, tourists and researchers, the Advisory Board shapes coexistence in the WPA.

The Advisory Board prioritises the perspectives of all stakeholders by meeting with key groups to learn from their experiences and work in the WPA. This provides a strong foundation to oversee and report on the Coexistence Framework and the balance it strikes between national security, commercial interests and cultural heritage.

Advisory Board Meetings

Since the *2018 Review of the Woomera Prohibited Area Coexistence Framework* (the Review), the Advisory Board's meetings have focused on progressing the 12 recommendations outlined therein. Some of the remaining seven recommendations are on track to be completed and transitioned to business-as-usual in the coming year, such as the roll-out of the WPA non-Defence technology management policy.

WPA Advisory Board members as of 30 June 2021

The Hon Amanda Vanstone AO
Chair

Ms Andrea Slattery
Deputy Chair

Air Marshal Mel Hupfeld AO, DSC
Chief of Air Force

Mr Peter Tesch
Deputy Secretary
Strategy, Policy and Industry
Department of Defence

Mr Sean Sullivan
Deputy Secretary
Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources

Dr Paul Heithersay PSM
Chief Executive
Department for Energy and Mining

Mr Richard Price
Chief Executive
Defence SA

2021-2022 Advisory Board meetings summary

November 2021 meeting

- Prioritised meeting with Aboriginal groups in 2022 to explore opportunities for mutually beneficial economic and cultural outcomes.
- Endorsed WPA case management approach for proactive engagement with WPA permit and deed holders.
- Ongoing collaboration between SA Government, Defence and OZ Minerals for Arkani Ngura Innovation and Technology Centre

May 2022 meeting

- First annual WPA Health Check which reported the Coexistence Framework is relevant and fit-for-purpose
- Acknowledged the enduring legacy of the Coexistence Framework
- 24 month technology trial found strong working relationships between Defence and WPA stakeholders. The collaborative non-Defence use of technology framework will be rolled out from late 2022
- The endorsed meeting minutes to be published on the WPA website

WPA Health Check 2021

The Advisory Board delivered a key recommendation from the Review with the first WPA Health Check in May 2022. Analysing coexistence arrangements, the Health Check found the Commonwealth and SA Government were working collaboratively with stakeholders and its performance was considered fit-for-purpose.

The Review recommends the Coexistence Framework be reviewed again by 2025 to ensure it remains contemporary and relevant. The Advisory Board agreed to the development of an annual Health Check in December 2019 to monitor the ongoing performance of the Coexistence Framework. The results of the annual Health Check will inform the Advisory Board's decision on the need for any future formal review.

The Health Check was driven by four "Key Expected Results" and explores stakeholder experiences as well as the administration of the WPA. It was informed by leveraging existing 'business-as-usual' stakeholder engagement, including:

- Case management meetings with resource and research permit holders;
- Air Force's routine engagement with pastoralists;
- Meetings with Aboriginal corporations and members of their communities;
- Tourists and opal miners' permit data;
- SA Government and Air Force's consultations with opal miners on changes to permit processes; and
- Ongoing collaboration with other peak bodies and stakeholders, including railway authorities, the Australian Space Agency, Geoscience Australia and local councils.

Key opportunities were also explored to streamline Defence's regulatory work and improve communication on upcoming closures to frequently used areas. Given the rolling COVID-19 disruptions to testing activities over the past year, the Health Check recommended Defence provide greater certainty and confidence to the public on access closures. Enhanced communication with stakeholders through clear instructions and accessible contact details for Defence on the WPA website will provide greater clarity for stakeholders while ensuring the safety and security of Defence activities.

KER 1
Set a unified direction on WPA coexistence

KER 2
Manage WPA coexistence expectations

KER 3
Drive WPA coexistence outcomes

KER 4
Assess the health of WPA coexistence

Another key measure involved agreeing to explore opportunities to invite Aboriginal corporations to senior meetings that coincide with the biannual Advisory Board meetings. This will ensure the Advisory Board is able to receive regular feedback and explore opportunities to enhance commercial and cultural activities in the WPA.

Health Check Findings

What is working well?

- Implementation of 2018 WPA Review recommendations is progressing well, with five completed and seven remaining.
- The WPA Rule has robust provisions for mitigating risks to non-Defence users through the exclusion periods process.
- Positive WPA media coverage, particularly on the resources and transport sectors.
- Partnership opportunities with Aboriginal groups, including the Reserve Compliance Officer and Indigenous Liaison Officer programs, are being progressed.
- Defence was praised by the resources sector for its quick response to short-notice access requests.
- Defence is exploring commercial opportunities with pastoralists in the WPA.

What isn't working well?

- Communication on upcoming closures to frequently used areas could be clearer.
- Communication on changes to exclusion periods for the resources sector could be improved.
- Formal feedback opportunities could be extended to tourists, opal mining and a range of other permit holders and WPA stakeholders.
- Defence's permit application forms could be more accessible for all stakeholders.

What should be retained?

- Balance economic opportunities with strategic risks from foreign investment through close collaboration and robust processes to uphold national security.
- Continue strong relationships with Aboriginal groups, resources and research sectors through invitations to senior official meetings.
- Stakeholders agree the WPA website and communications are accessible and useful.

What could be improved?

- Defence should explore ways to streamline its regulatory role, including legislative amendments.
- WPA's strategic direction should be regularly informed by national security implications.
- Focus on WPA strategic direction with a focus on the implementation plan, dashboard report, annual report, forward work program and Advisory Board's representation.

Key events in the WPA

COVID-19 Response

COVID-19 continued to challenge WPA stakeholders, owing to reduced access arrangements and impacts to operations due to staffing shortages.

Defence faced pressures in delivering a robust activity schedule due to domestic and international travel restrictions. Trials continued while adhering to Commonwealth and SA Government health advice and guidelines.

As in previous years, **Aboriginal communities** responded to COVID-19 by limiting access based on SA Government advice. Defence, the SA Government and the resources sector worked collaboratively with Aboriginal communities to remain aware of their land access arrangements and how they could assist with minimising the spread of COVID-19.

Pastoral stations also suffered delays from travel restrictions as well as staff and contractor shortages. Shearing teams from New Zealand were delayed and this meant pastoral activities concluded later than initially anticipated.



Sheep shearing at Mount Eba pastoral station

The **resources sector** also continued to be impacted by COVID-19, leading to staff and contractor shortages as well as disruptions to supply chains. Permit holders in the WPA have demonstrated resilience given the upheaval and shifting industry dynamics.

Tourism has returned to the WPA and quickly reached pre-COVID-19 levels as domestic and international travel restrictions eased. Tourists returned to the Woomera Village as they transited across SA and the outback.



Tourists returned to the WPA as travel restrictions eased. Popular destinations, including the Woomera Rocket Park, enjoyed a surge in visitors.

2022 South Australian Flooding

The South Australian flooding in early 2022 saw more than 200mm of rainfall in 24 hours. The wild weather ravaged areas across northern SA in an extreme event meteorologists reported as occurring only once every few hundred years.

The WPA was not spared from the torrential downpour and was exposed to considerable rainfall and flooding throughout January.

Defence demonstrated a swift and agile response, assisting stakeholders by promptly delivering food and supplies to tourists and locals stranded at Coober Pedy during road closures.

The extensive road and railway closures meant disruptions for the transportation and supply of materials and logistics to the resources sector. Collaboration with permit holders enabled operations to resume at full capacity after initial delays and setbacks.

Defence's ability to work cooperatively with stakeholders to conduct successful resupply missions and facilitate mining operations highlights the practical benefits of upholding coexistence in the WPA.

Across the WPA, the landscape was inundated with water from the copious rainfall. But the consensus from locals is that the Woomera outback has never looked better.



Waterproofing during SA floods in January. Courtesy of Barton Gold

370km of Stuart Highway between Coober Pedy and Pimba were cut off

Railway line closed at 18 locations across the 300km between Port Augusta and Tarcoola

Tourists and locals were stranded in Coober Pedy until the flooding abated

Road and rail closures impacted supply of essentials and equipment

Air Force led food resupply missions to Coober Pedy with a C-27J Spartan aircraft

Mining operations were closed with many unable to resume until later in 2022



Areas across the WPA flourished due to the rainfall

Defence in the WPA

The WPA is a vital strategic asset for the testing of current and emerging weapons platforms and systems. Spanning 122,000 square kilometres, its size, low population density, remote location and subdued electromagnetic field make it a unique testing area for Defence capabilities. As the strategic environment evolves and collaboration with allies and partners continues, the WPA will remain a vital asset for capability testing.

The WPA is the largest land-based weapons test range in the Western world, roughly the size of England

2021-22 Defence Activities

While COVID-19 posed challenges to testing activities, Defence continued to work with partners and stakeholders to conduct weapons tests in Australia's national interests.

The WPA featured the testing of drone technology for short-notice deployment overseas and advanced weapon systems evaluation in the land and air domains. The WPA also hosted a range of other operations designed to support the development of hypersonic missiles, unmanned aerial vehicles, explosive ordnance and non-kinetic electromagnetic technology.

The testing of long-range strike weapons will increase in coming years to bolster Defence's deterrence capabilities in light of an increasingly contested geostrategic outlook.

WPA Range Activities

Air Force's new Range Control Centre and Range Instrumentation System fostered a test and evaluation environment for fifth-generation weapon systems in the land, air and maritime domains. This work will continue to accommodate increasingly complex and integrated weapons platforms, systems and capabilities.



The Canberra bomber developed by English Electric and used by the RAAF in the Vietnam War

Evolving regional circumstances coupled with the rapid pace of technological change underscores the importance of the WPA as a vital strategic asset. As such, testing activities are expected to ramp up and will increasingly involve collaboration with international partners and industry.

Defence is also progressing long-term projects to upgrade the Woomera Village and airbase. A 2MW solar farm has been proposed and work has begun to engage a contractor to deliver the project.

Further technical development of advanced range instrumentation is also expected to accommodate the test and evaluation of increasingly complex and integrated weapons platforms, systems and capabilities in the coming years.

Defence remains agile and responsive to meet the needs of domestic stakeholders while forging international partnerships in the national interest.

Exclusion periods

The WPA is designated a 'prohibited area' for the testing of war materiel. Under the legislative framework, Defence may grant regulated access to non-Defence users.

This access is suspended for safety and security purposes during exclusion periods designated for testing activities. Defence aims to minimize disruptions for stakeholders to the extent possible by providing notice on upcoming exclusion periods and working with stakeholders to mitigate impacts to their activities.

Due to the impacts and uncertainty arising from COVID-19, Defence's activities suffered setbacks and delays similar to other WPA stakeholders. Late notice cancellations of exclusion periods were unavoidable due to the extensive logistics of testing activities and COVID-19 travel restrictions. Defence leveraged its close working relationships with WPA stakeholders to keep them informed of impending changes and notified them as soon as possible.

Defence is taking steps to reduce the impacts of scheduling changes. A user-pays model is being implemented to hold Defence projects accountable for the cost of scheduling changes. This will encourage timely and efficient activities that will reduce the burden of changes and provide certainty for WPA stakeholders. Exclusion periods are published on the WPA website.

Defence is also exploring opportunities to improve zoning arrangements for the Green Zone. This would explore options for a more flexible grid model to give Defence greater agility for trials, and reduce the impact to other users stemming from closures to the entire zone.

Red Zone
Defence continuous use zone
365 days exclusive Defence access

Amber Zone 1
Defence periodic use zone 1
up to 140 days exclusive Defence access

Amber Zone 2
Defence periodic use zone 2
up to 70 days exclusive Defence access

Green Zone
Defence infrequent use zone
up to 56 days exclusive Defence access

Ghost Bat

The first Australian-built aircraft in more than 50 years, the MQ-28A Ghost Bat, is being tested at the WPA.

Formerly known as the Loyal Wingman, the Boeing Australia aircraft completed its biggest milestone yet with successful test flights in the WPA last year.

The unique testing environment of the WPA means these technologically advanced drones will complement other strategic capabilities already in service.

The Ghost Bat unmanned aerial vehicle is the first military aircraft to be produced in Australia in over half a century



Aboriginal groups

The WPA is home to the traditional lands of six Aboriginal groups. Defence acknowledges these Aboriginal groups maintain strong and enduring connections to the land and are the traditional custodians of heritage sites and values in the WPA.

Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara | Antakirinja Matu-Yankunytjatjara Arabana | Gawler Ranges | Kokatha | Maralinga Tjarutja

Meetings with Aboriginal corporations

The Advisory Board agreed at the November 2021 meeting to bring forward meetings with Aboriginal corporations to strengthen ties with their communities. This builds on the Advisory Board's endorsement of the WPA Aboriginal Engagement Strategy to foster productive working relationships with Aboriginal groups.

The Advisory Board met with the majority of the corporate boards representing Aboriginal groups in the WPA in early 2022. The meetings enabled the Advisory Board to explore opportunities to promote Aboriginal commercial and cultural interests.

Participants emphasised the importance of incorporating land management and conservation practices into WPA operations and identified opportunities for infrastructure development and commercial activity. The Advisory Board agreed to enhance the relationships Defence has cultivated with Traditional Owners to facilitate jobs, investment and economic growth in the WPA.

Consensus also emerged on the need to prioritise Working Level Agreements (WLAs) with Traditional Owners, with one agreement having been finalised. Defence is providing grants to each group to assist with the costs associated with WLA consideration. The Advisory Board will continue to work closely with Aboriginal communities to progress cultural interests and economic priorities for mutual benefit.

Reserve Compliance Officer Program

Since 2016, the Air Force Reserve Compliance Officer (RCO) program has played a crucial role engaging with Aboriginal communities in the WPA. The RCO program is an important collaboration between the Air Force and Aboriginal communities to provide employment opportunities and integrate cultural awareness into compliance activities. It provides Defence with valuable insights into Aboriginal kinship, values and the intimate connections between one another and the land. RCOs are endorsed by their communities and facilitate an exchange of history, culture, knowledge and language in support of coexistence arrangements in the WPA.

3 RCO members representing the Maralinga Tjarutja and AMY communities



The RCO program allows members from Aboriginal communities to participate in security patrols as part of the Air Force's Compliance Monitoring Team

Heritage Management Plan

Finalised WPA Heritage Management Plan

The WPA Heritage Management Plan (HMP) was finalised in mid-2022 and is the most comprehensive HMP ever commissioned by Defence. It is the result of years of extensive consultation and outreach with Aboriginal communities in the WPA.

The HMP is a unique document that catalogues significant Aboriginal, historic and natural heritage values across the WPA. It provides practical conservation policies and processes, and identifies key activities that will require consultation with Aboriginal groups and other key stakeholders.

The HMP will assist Defence to plan its activities in a culturally sensitive way and promote the protection of heritage values within the WPA. Defence will continue to work with Aboriginal groups to respectfully harness culturally sensitive knowledge and access the WPA for daily activities and operations.

Defence has been mindful to consult Aboriginal groups to develop protocols that safeguard sensitive cultural information. Restricted HMP volumes are designed to protect culturally sensitive information specific to each Aboriginal group and will remain the property of these communities. Defence has also provided training and education to personnel and contractors to ensure the protocols are administered appropriately and effectively. Defence will continue to work with Aboriginal groups to explore opportunities to preserve and manage their cultural heritage in the WPA.

Ultimately, the HMP provides Defence with sound policies to administer the WPA in accordance with Indigenous requirements, safeguard information significant to Traditional Owners, and ensure the correct protocols and procedures are followed to minimise Defence's impact on heritage values.

Integrating and consolidating natural and cultural heritage guidance and processes into one framework enables Defence to maintain and build upon its strong relationships with Aboriginal stakeholders in the WPA.



Kokatha and RAAF representatives inspecting new interpretive signs at Lake Hart following a HMP consultation meeting held at the Woomera Village

Resources sector

The WPA is a lucrative area for commodities and is a considerable source of revenue and growth for the SA economy. Mineral deposits of copper, gold, iron, uranium and silver are prevalent across the WPA and have sparked interest and investment from many junior and established mining companies alike.

Mining exploration and production are the WPA's greatest commercial assets

The WPA comprises 12% of South Australia

Located in the mineral rich Gawler Craton and Stuart Shelf

$378 million in royalties from the WPA since 2014



Drilling at Aurora Tank in May 2022. Courtesy of Marmota Limited

There has been a noticeable uptick in activity in exploration and production operations since COVID-19 restrictions eased.

Soaring energy prices, solid export volumes and a weaker Australian dollar are driving a surge in resource and energy exports. The current surge in export values is generating renewed interest in Australian commodities, including those found in the WPA.

Defence and the resources sector have worked collaboratively and permit holders have praised Defence's flexibility and responsiveness to fulfil short-notice access requests. This supported the resources sector to respond to disruptions and minimize impacts to keep activities progressing smoothly.

Further, the recently updated WPA website has received positive feedback for its accessibility and tailored guidance when accessing application forms and seeking relevant information.

Flooding in early 2022 led to delays in accessing remote sites as well as transporting equipment and staff to locations across the WPA. However, operations had returned to normal and fully resumed by the end of the reporting period.



Prominent Hill mine can offer some appealing scenery, as can much of the WPA's landscape. Courtesy of Tina Law

Key highlights from exploration activities in the WPA

Petratherm Limited
New discovery of rare earth elements at the Comet project and confirmed the regional extent of mineralisation.

Marmota Limited
Purchased new exploration licences and are now exploring over 9,000km in the WPA.

Barton Gold Limited
New gold opportunites were the focus near the Challenger Gold Mine.

Petrex Australia Pty Ltd
Continued working with Maralinga Tjarutja and AMY on land access to move forward with three exploration licences.

Exploration operations

The WPA is home to an abundance of resource exploration activities. With over 150 mineral exploration licences in the WPA, interest in the region is increasing. This growth in demand is reflected in the seven new exploration permits issued by Defence during the reporting period.

Operations are being led by both junior explorers and well-known mining companies, including BHP, Rio Tinto, FMG Resources and OZ Minerals. Mineral exploration expenditure for the period is expected to be approximately $12 million based on current available expenditure data.

Production operations

Mining production operations expanded in the WPA during the reporting period, with increased activity from existing operators. There are currently five major mines located in the WPA and three are actively operating.

The Prominent Hill copper-gold mine, as well as the Peculiar Knob and Cairn Hill iron ore mines, collectively employ over 1,500 people and during the reporting period contributed approximately $57.7 million in royalties to SA. This is approximately a 10 per cent increase of $5.2 million from the previous financial year.

Peak Iron Mines continued operations at the Peculiar Knob mine through its subsidiary Southern Iron Pty Ltd. A new mineral lease was also granted to Peak Iron Mines for its Buzzard iron ore project, which is an exciting new addition for resources production in the WPA.

Prominent Hill mine, located 650km northwest of Coober Pedy, is a medium-sized, high-quality copper gold mine that has been operating since 2009. Through ongoing and extensive exploration work within its mineral lease and surrounding tenements, owner and operator Oz Minerals has extended Prominent Hill's mine life from 2021 to 2036. The $600 million "Wira" hoisting shaft at Prominent Hill expansion is currently underway.

Demand for copper continues to grow around the world as investment in clean energy rises, which is likely to generate long-term interest in mining investment and operations within the WPA.

Gawler Phase 2

A key recommendation from the 2018 WPA Review advocated for continued geological and economic analysis of the mineral, energy and groundwater resources potential of the Gawler Craton. Between 2017 and 2021, the South Australian Government, in partnership with Geoscience Australia, undertook the world's largest high-resolution airborne geophysical and terrain imaging program - the Gawler Craton Airborne Survey.

The SA Government has released all survey data from the program, with a final report published in early 2022. A follow-up program, Gawler Phase 2, brings together the data science community and exploration findings to ensure SA prospectors have access to robust and detailed geoscience data. It will fill gaps in the current database, ensure information will support future data science applications, and develop a comprehensive understanding of mineral systems.

Accelerated Discovery Initiative

Mineral exploration continues to be supported by government initiatives across SA. The Accelerated Discovery Initiative (ADI) is a three-year program to co-fund exploration programs. It will embrace innovation, collaboration, and capacity-building to advance exploration activity in SA.

$10.5 million in funding has been awarded to 52 proposals, including 10 proposals for projects in the WPA.

ROUND 1

Marmota
Expressions of mineralisation in surface plant biochemistry on the North West Gawler Craton

Petratherm
Eastern Mabel Creek Ridge (Deeps) (completed 21 Dec 2022)

ROUND 2

Barton Gold
Reinvigoration of regional gold exploration in the Tarcoola District

Petratherm
Geochemical sampling method to locate blind gold deposits in the Gawler Craton

Red Tiger Resources
Mulgathing project (completed 29 Jun 2022)

Tigers Dominion Group
Mount Brady project (completed 29 Jun 2022)

ROUND 3

Indiana Resources
VMS potential of the Harris Greenstone Domain

Petratherm
Deep EM surveying for large BHT and ISCG deposits

Roma Resources
Tarcoola Corridor 2D seismic survey

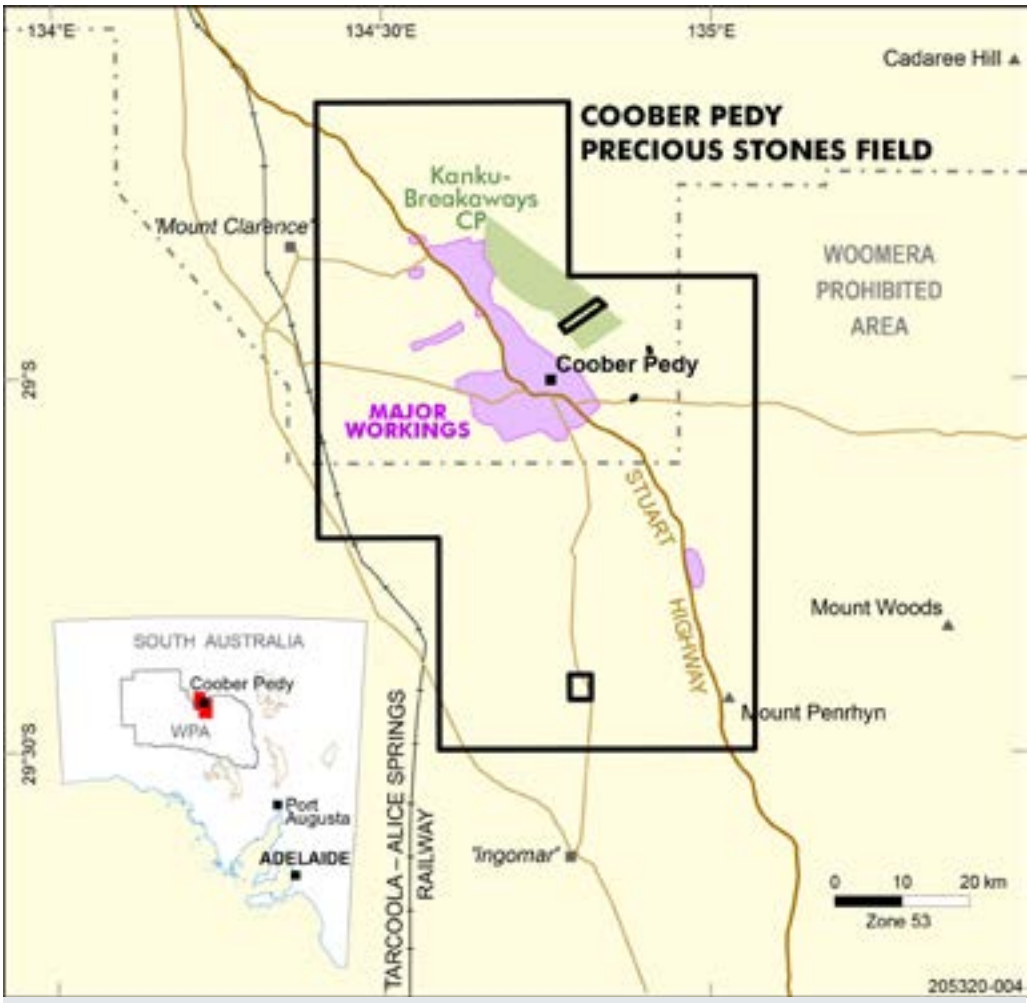
Roma Resources
Tarcoola Corridor drill test validation of GPR trial output data







Map illustrating ADI funded proposals in the WPA. Courtesy of SA Government



Map highlighting the expanse of the Precious Stones Field. Courtesy of SA Government

Opal and Precious Stone Operations

As well as mining exploration and production activities, opal prospecting is an important part of WPA commercial activity and the South Australian economy. This is best illustrated by the fact that 5,000 square kilometres of the lucrative Coober Pedy Proclaimed Precious Stones Field fall within the WPA.

Designated as the state's official gem in 1975, opal mining tends to be a transient activity with a constant turnover of registered tenements. Exceptions occur when the precious stone is identified, after which tenements are usually renewed on an ongoing basis until supply has been exhausted.

Opal mining operations in the WPA continue with 54 registered precious stone tenements in Allan Rise, Jasper Gully, Opal Ridge and Opal Valley. These areas could produce around $1.8 million worth of opals. During the reporting period, SA's Department for Energy and Mining Opal Fields staff conducted a total of 135 inspections in the area.

Did you know?

80%

of the world's opal market comes from South Australia

Breakdown of registered precious stone tenements in the WPA:

Allan Rise	8
Jasper Gully	1
Leonard Rise	0
Opal Ridge	7
Opal Valley	38
Reynolds Ridge	0
Tee Valley	0

Modernised the opal mining permit system

New opal mining permit system

The Review recommendation to modernise the opal mining permit system has been implemented. The streamlined licencing regime was adopted in April 2022 and has received positive feedback from opal miners. The updated access forms has reduced the administrative burden for all parties and improved the clarity and efficiency of the application process.

The new permit system has been jointly administered and supported by Air Force and the SA Government, which are working closely with prospective applicants and opal miners. All permits now have a nominal expiry date of 31 March each year, which enables Air Force and the SA Government to streamline their compliance patrols and security checks as shared custodians of the WPA.

This collaborative effort highlights the ongoing strength of the Coexistence Framework and the productive outcomes that can be achieved when the SA Government, Defence and WPA stakeholders work cooperatively for mutual benefit.

Pastoralists

Pastoralists were rewarded with good grazing conditions throughout the reporting period, with many capitalising on the rainfall.

The wild weather in early 2022, while a welcome reprieve from previous years' drought conditions, caused damage to infrastructure and delayed operations due to road closures and disruptions to transportation and supply chains.

The impacts of COVID-19 also meant interstate and international travel restrictions severely disrupted seasonal work across Australia. As pastoralists rely on hired hands to assist with tasks, delays in shearing and crutching activities were rampant throughout the sector and caused great uncertainty. This has especially affected shearing teams travelling from New Zealand.

As a result of a change in the SA Government in 2022, pastoral leases are now managed by the SA Department of Environment and Water.

The comprehensive, ongoing review of the *Pastoral Land Management and Conservation Act 1989* (SA) will continue to examine pastoral interactions with Defence activities and how leases are administered in the WPA. An amended Pastoral Act could be tabled in the SA Parliament soon.

Parakylia Pastoral Station

Defence recognises the ongoing impacts to pastoralists operating in the WPA, particularly in the Red Zone. Defence works closely with all pastoral stations to mitigate these disruptions wherever possible.

In June 2022, Defence acquired Parakylia Station to allow more flexibility for testing activities to proceed within the Red Zone. The existing pastoral leaseholder will remain to manage the land and tend to livestock.

26

Pastoral leases in the WPA



Sheep shearing at Mount Eba pastoral station

Tourism

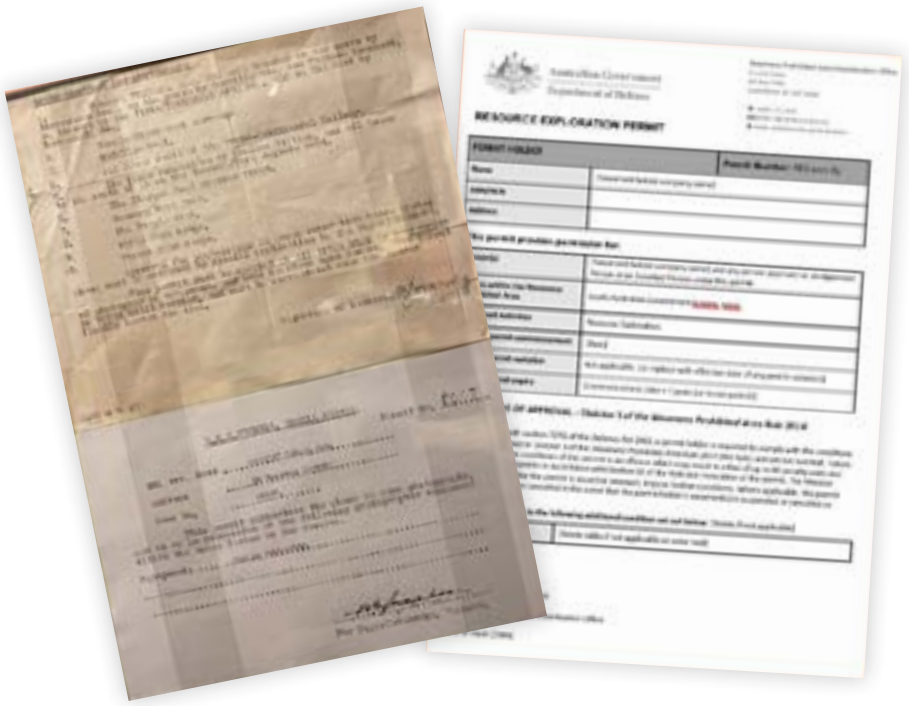
Tourism in the WPA was severely impacted by COVID-19, with many visitors unable to enter SA or travel to regional areas. However, as travel restrictions eased, the number of visitors steadily increased.

While tourist permits were off to a slow start, by mid-2022 they had returned to their pre-COVID-19 numbers.

Tourists are often drawn to the Woomera Village on their travels while transiting SA and outback Australia.

The rich history of the WPA region has been preserved in the Woomera History Museum, Woomera Rocket Park and Woomera Heritage Centre. Collectively, the artefacts and memorabilia on display offer an illuminating snapshot into the past and highlight the rapid pace of technological sophistication as well as the shifting priorities in range operations and activities over time.

For example, the Woomera Heritage Centre has a permit on display which once granted permission for a camera to be used in the Woomera Village. These days, permits to gain access into the WPA have been updated and are issued electronically.



Contrast of WPA permit applications past and present



Woomera Rocket Park

The Woomera Village is home to a popular tourist attraction known as the Woomera Rocket Park, which displays historical aircraft and missiles.

Defence has completed a $900,000 refurbishment project to restore rockets and missiles at the site.

To preserve the displays, the aircraft and missiles were repainted in a weather-proof coating, to keep the Rocket Park a vibrant and attractive destination for visitors.

The works resulted from Defence Science and Technology Group (DSTG) commissioning a 2015 review to renovate the rockets and missiles. Given the considerable expenses involved, DSTG decided to transfer ownership of the rockets to the Air Force's History and Heritage Branch in February 2020.

The History and Heritage Branch had previously upgraded and repainted several ex-trial aircraft showcased at the Rocket Park a year earlier in 2019. Air Force agreed to proceed with the projectile renovations and finalised the project works during the reporting period.

Refurbishment at the Rocket Park continues, with Air Force currently working on displaying a missile tracking radar and relocating missiles.

Defence will continue to explore opportunities to feature historic military equipment at the park to preserve and inform the public's understanding of Woomera's rich history.



Jindivik drone used as a radio-controlled range target and later to tow targets



Royal Navy Sea Slug missile (foreground) and Black Arrow satellite launcher (background)



(From left to right) – Gloster Meteor WW2 vintage jet, GAF Jindivik target drone and Skylark rocket used for atmospheric tests and space research

Research access

The vast and remote nature of the WPA means it is a unique and prized location for research projects. In recognition of the WPA's wide-ranging potential for diverse interest groups, Defence facilitates access to the WPA for academic research.

The Australian National University (ANU) and Curtin University are leading innovative and ground-breaking research in the WPA.

ANU's School of Earth Sciences has a small, dedicated team conducting seismic surveys, which contributes to national seismic data by monitoring earthquakes and seismic activity throughout Australia. Following promising results, this work may continue for up to a further two years with the support of Defence.

A research permit for Curtin University's scientific research on the observation and recovery of meteorites in the WPA was issued during the reporting period. The cameras used in the tracking activities are part of the Desert Fireball Network. Curtin University operates this system of astronomical cameras throughout SA and Western Australia to capture insightful new footage for researchers to observe and track falling meteorites.

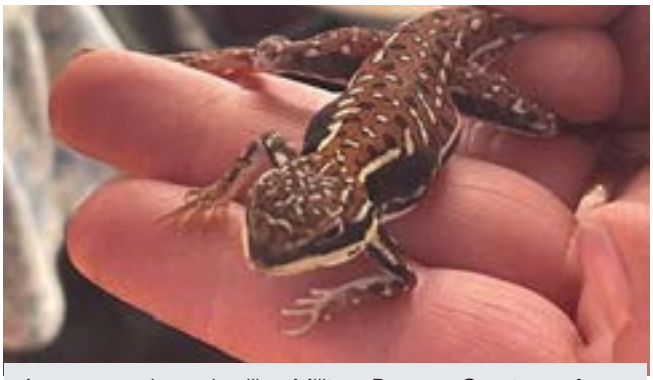
Waterhouse Club scientific excursion

A team of 39 researchers from the Waterhouse Club – including scientists and volunteers – camped at Wintinna Station to conduct a biological field survey of small animals in the Tallaringa Conservation Park.

SA Museum scientists identified the area was under-surveyed and that an expedition could provide an opportunity to gain a deeper scientific understanding of the biodiverse native wildlife inhabiting the region.

Defence supported the Waterhouse Club to access the WPA for the week-long survey. The team observed birds and installed line traps and nets to collect and catalogue specimens, including insects and bats, to inform and expand the museum's fauna records and national animal databases.

The scientific excursion uncovered valuable information for future environmental planning, assessments and conservation management activities in the WPA.



A common dune-dwelling Military Dragon. Courtesy of Waterhouse Club



A 'harp' trap for safely capturing microbats. Courtesy of Waterhouse Club

Environmental management

Land management and biodiversity conservation are a key focus for Defence in the WPA. Defence's Base Services contractor, Ventia, has been leading projects to protect native fauna and flora through the management of pests and other threats to the natural habitat.

Protecting native fauna

Fauna surveys have provided a greater awareness of the WPA's native wildlife. Surveys indicated an increase in ground-dwelling fauna, including the Short-beaked echidna, Knob-tailed geckos, Shingleback lizards, Gibber dragons and Sand goannas. These animals are thriving in their natural environments.



Short-beaked echidna

Pest management

Rampant coral cacti infestations have long plagued the WPA. Defence employed innovative biosecurity measures, which have controlled the weed populations with remarkable success. Defence also conducted control measures on rope cacti and prickly pear weeds.



A testament to the cacti biocontrol program's success: a vacant house block had over 95% of its weed populations controlled.



Major Mitchell's Cockatoo

Feral animal control

Controlling feral animals has been a key focus, with multi-year projects working to address feral rabbits and cats in the WPA proving successful.

Feral cats are being targeted during autumn and spring to ensure RAAF airfields and sewage treatment plants, where infestations have occurred, remain operational and can run smoothly.

Notable returns of native species such as the Black-fronted Dotterel, Southern Boobook and Tawny Frogmouth have been noted in areas where feral cats have been removed.



Feral cat in night vision

Looking forward

Throughout the reporting period, WPA stakeholder activities were shaped by domestic and international developments and trends. COVID-19 continued to pose challenges, although collaboration minimised disruptions.

Defence suffered setbacks to its test scheduling last year due to COVID-19, but was able to increase activities in the first half of 2022. Defence predicts a steady and sustained growth in testing for the remainder of 2022 and into 2023 with the easing of travel restrictions.

Non-Defence access for commercial and cultural purposes was also affected. In particular, Aboriginal groups, mining companies and pastoralists suffered setbacks. Defence and the SA Government will continue to work with stakeholders to effectively manage COVID-19 and minimise risks and disruptions.

Defence's largest ever Heritage Management Plan (HMP) was finalised to preserve Aboriginal cultural sites and integrate land management policies into Defence's operations. Integrating HMP protocols and practices into Defence's activities and interactions with Traditional Owners will be a key focus moving forward to consolidate the Advisory Board's enduring relationships with Aboriginal communities.

To that end, HMP training for Defence personnel will be conducted over the coming months to ensure appropriate understanding and managing of heritage values when planning and conducting Defence activities.

The Advisory Board will continue to support coexistence arrangements by progressing the outstanding 2018 Review recommendations. The Advisory Board expects considerable progress to be made over the coming year, particularly in streamlining regulatory processes to ensure clarity and conditions of access. The Advisory Board anticipates the non-Defence technology policy will be implemented. This initiative will allow Defence to more effectively regulate and manage stakeholder technology by defining and administering permissible technologies within a risk assessment framework.

In light of the evolving strategic environment, preserving the WPA as a national security asset for the testing of war materiel and close collaboration with partners has become imperative to Australia's security. The use of the WPA for the development and testing of long-range strike capabilities, including hypersonic missiles and drones, will increase as a result.

This surge in testing highlights the need for the Advisory Board to consolidate stakeholder relationships to effectively balance the WPA's strategic value with the commercial and cultural needs of all.



Then and now - Woomera's now-decommissioned European Launcher Development Organisation launch site

Annex A: WPA Exclusion Periods

Table 1: Exclusion periods July 2021– June 2022		
Access Zone	**Exclusion period Determined by Instrument**	**Status**
Amber 1	3 July - 9 July 2021	Revoked
	10 July - 16 July 2021	Revoked
	17 July - 23 July 2021	Revoked
	24 July - 30 July 2021	Revoked
	20 September - 26 September 2021	Exclusion exercised
	27 September - 3 October 2021	Exclusion exercised
	4 October - 10 October 2021	Exclusion exercised
	11 October - 17 October 2021	Exclusion exercised
	18 October - 24 October 2021	Exclusion exercised
	25 October - 31 October 2021	Exclusion exercised
	1 November - 7 November 2021	Exclusion exercised
	8 November - 14 November 2021	Exclusion exercised
	15 November - 21 November 2021	Exclusion exercised
	7 March - 13 March 2022	Revoked
	14 March - 20 March 2022	Revoked
	21 March - 27 March 2022	Revoked
	28 March - 3 April 2022	Revoked
	4 April - 10 April 2022	Revoked
	23 May - 29 May 2022	Revoked
	30 May - 5 June 2022	Revoked
Amber 2	3 July - 9 July 2021	Revoked
	10 July - 16 July 2021	Revoked
	4 October - 10 October 2021	Exclusion exercised
	11 October - 17 October 2021	Exclusion exercised
	18 October - 24 October 2021	Exclusion exercised
	25 October - 31 October 2021	Exclusion exercised
	1 November - 7 November 2021	Exclusion exercised
	21 March - 27 March 2022	Revoked
	28 March - 3 April 2022	Revoked
	4 April - 10 April 2022	Revoked
Green	21 October - 27 October 2021	Exclusion exercised
	28 October - 3 November 2021	Exclusion exercised
	4 November - 10 November 2021	Exclusion exercised
	11 November - 17 November 2021	Repeal instrument
	18 November - 21 November 2021	Repeal instrument

Suspension of Standing Permission on Tarcoola to Darwin Railway	21 October - 27 October 2021	Exclusion exercised
	28 October - 3 November 2021	Exclusion exercised
	4 November - 10 November 2021	Exclusion exercised
	11 November - 17 November 2021	Repeal instrument
	18 November - 21 November 2021	Repeal instrument

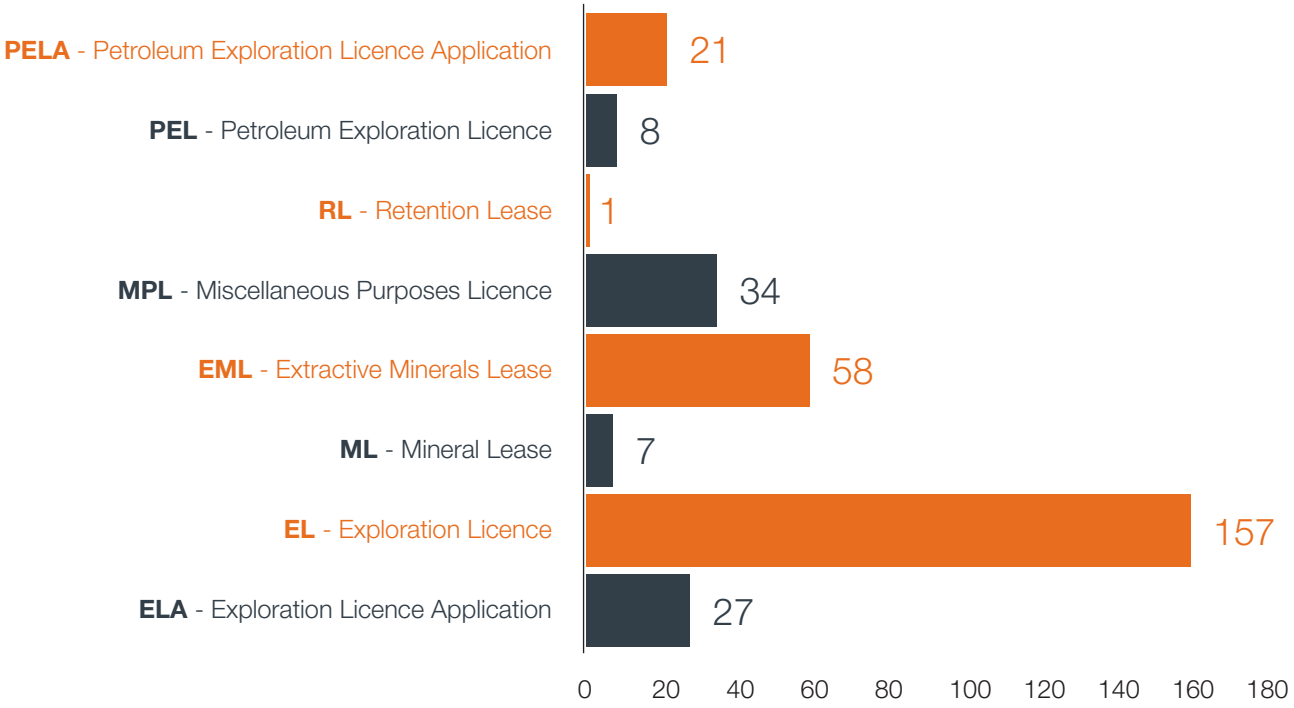
Table 2: Exclusion periods July 2022 – June 2023

Access Zone	Exclusion period Determined by Instrument	Status
Amber 1	04 July 2022 – 10 July 2022	Planned
	11 July 2022 – 17 July 2022	
	18 July 2022 – 24 July 2022	
	25 July 2022 – 31 July 2022	
	01 August 2022 – 07 August 2022	
	08 August 2022 – 14 August 2022	
	10 October 2022 – 16 October 2022	
	17 October 2022 – 23 October 2022	
	24 October 2022 – 30 October 2022	
	31 October 2022 – 06 November 2022	
	07 November 2022 – 13 November 2022	
	20 February 2023 – 26 February 2023	
	27 February 2023 – 05 March 2023	
	06 March 2023 – 12 March 2023	
	13 March 2023 – 19 March 2023	
	20 March 2023 – 26 March 2023	
	03 June 2023 – 09 June 2023	
	10 June 2023 – 16 June 2023	
	17 June 2023 – 23 June 2023	
	24 June 2023 – 30 June 2023	
Amber 2	16 October 2022 – 22 October 2022	Planned
	23 October 2022 – 29 October 2022	
	30 October 2022 – 05 November 2022	
	20 February 2023 – 26 February 2023	
	27 February 2023 – 05 March 2023	
	06 March 2023 – 12 March 2023	
	03 June 2023 – 09 June 2023	
	10 June 2023 – 16 June 2023	
	17 June 2023 – 23 June 2023	
	24 June 2023 – 30 June 2023	

Annex B

SA Government Licences

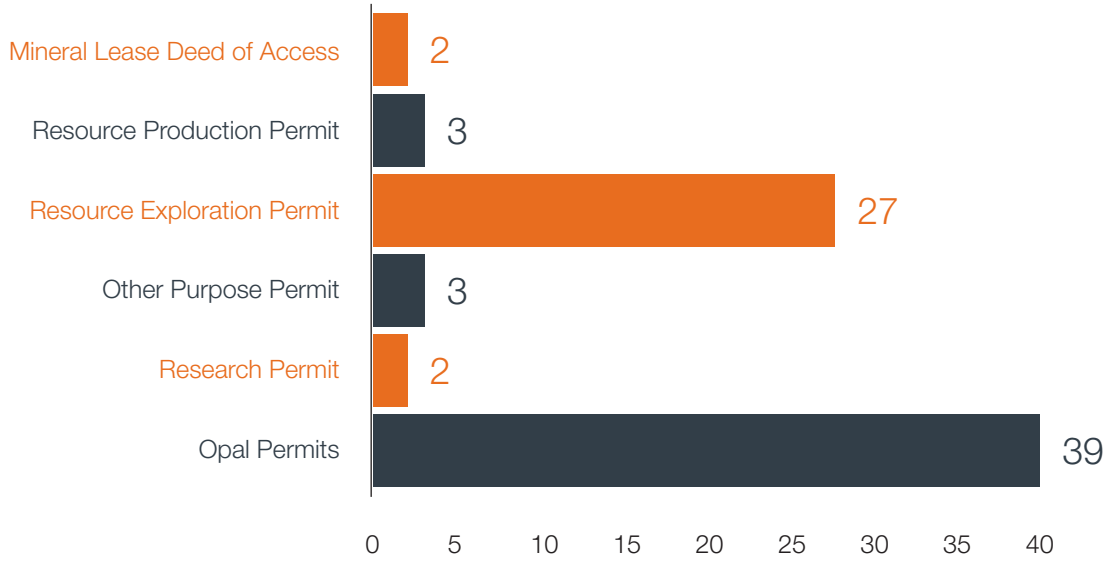
Current licences as at 30 June 2022



Annex C

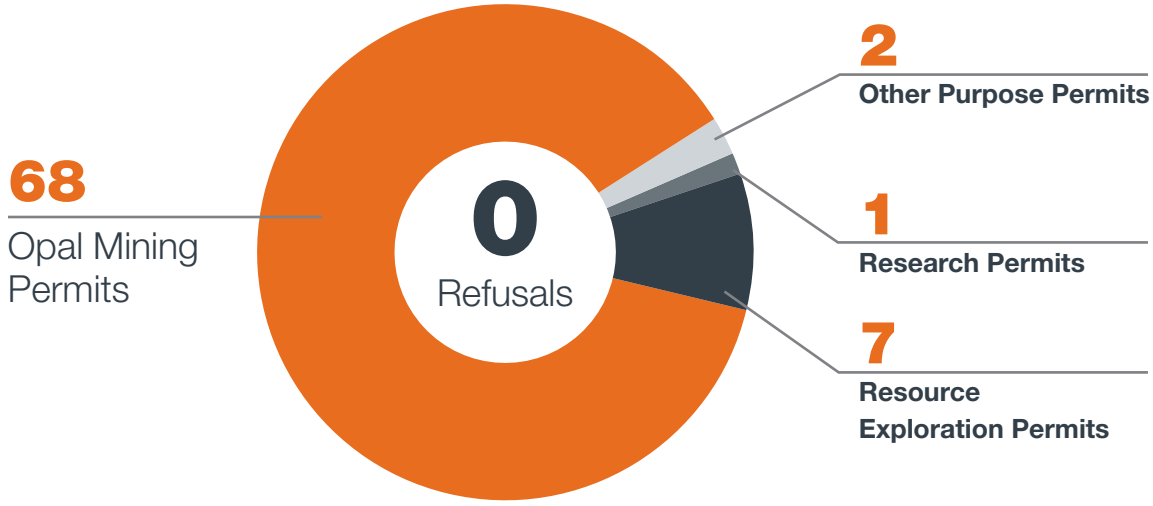
2021-22 Defence Permits and Deeds

Permits and Deeds as at 30 June 2022



2021-22 Total permits, access requests and persons issued

TOTAL PERMITS ISSUED 2021-22



RESOURCE EXPLORATION PERMITS

Permits Issued
7

Permits Varied or Renewed
18

Permits Surrendered
6

TOURIST PERMITS



369
Permits Issued
100% Approvals



632
Number of people under the permits
(0 Refusals)

APPROVED AND ESCORTED PERSONS



1,131
Approved Person applications lodged
100% Approvals



417
Escorted Person applications lodged
100% Approvals

ACCESS REQUESTS (W007)



162
Processed
100% Approvals



2,529
Number of personnel processed
100% Approvals



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