

Coal & Mineral Reporting Reform

March 2020



Introduction

In July 2019 the Department released new [minerals and coal reporting guidelines](#) (the Guidelines). The Guidelines seek significantly more data requests than previously sought by the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy (the Department).

QRC and AMEC appreciate the Department's willingness to receive industry feedback on the Guidelines and to further refine them based on industry's feedback. It is industry's understanding that regulation amendments will be required to give full effect to the Guidelines with the goal being they will become a mandatory requirement by 1 January 2021.

There are three key themes in the feedback received from members:

1. Supportive of raw geoscience data to be provided to government and publicly released after a period of confidentiality;
2. Data required by the Department held under a production lease is unclear; and
3. Historical data that is commercially sensitive must continue to be managed under the premise it was provided.

Industry would like to acknowledge the companies that actively participated in this industry body consultation process, understanding the review of the Guidelines and participation in workshops is a time-consuming process. QRC engaged David Green of Primed Global to assist in developing an industry consensus and thank him for his role in this important work. Below is a complete list of companies involved in this process.

Anglo American (coal and minerals)
Batchfire Resources
BHP
Bounty
Carpentaria Gold Pty Ltd
Copper Mountain
Glencore (coal and copper)
Idemitsu Australia Resources
Kestrel Coal
Metallica Minerals
Minjar Gold
MMG
Moho Resources Ltd
New Hope Group

Peabody Energy
Pembroke Olive Downs
QCoal
Qmetco
Rio Tinto
Rocklands Resources
Round Oak Minerals
South 32
Teck Australia Pty Ltd
Terra Search Pty Ltd
U&D mining
Valiant
Vitrinite

Industry Feedback

Industry acknowledges the benefits of more accessible data, particularly given it has proven to lead to new discoveries. Data held by resource companies has been accumulated over many years and often over many decades. Industry understands for this data to be further used, it must be in a format that can be shared with the Department and the public.

The below industry position was reached through the following guiding principles:

- The data given must add value to either/all government, industry and the public decision making;
- Data provided under the premise of confidentiality must remain confidential where there is commercial sensitivity to do so; and
- Data must be held in a secure and accessible database with adequate security controls.

Since the Guidelines were released, consultations with industry have revealed the Department is seeking the raw geoscience data from industry. Industry has been challenged with the Department's request for the coal and mineral industry to agree to confidentiality periods, particularly given there is no common definition used in the Guidelines for raw geoscience data.

⇒ The industry position is provided under the caveat the commercial data provided will not be made public under a future policy shift.

⇒ Industry is supportive of mandating CoalLog as the official data reporting standard for Queensland coal geoscience data. Industry supports this standard be mandated as soon as possible.

RAW GEOSCIENCE DATA ONLY

It is industry's strong position that only raw geoscience data should be provided to the Department and not all of this data provided should be publicly released. QRC held a number of workshops with members and AMEC to work through all the data requests outlined in the Guidelines to determine what data industry defines as raw or interpretive. The industry position on each data type is outlined in the **attached table**.

Table summary:

- **Items in green text** - Industry agrees to providing raw geoscience data for public release after a five-year period (from submission).
- **Items in red text** - Industry is not supportive of providing to government.
- **Items in yellow highlight** - Industry considers these should be removed from the Reporting Guidelines altogether.

Industry expressed an overwhelming view that interpretive data should not be provided to government as well as be released publicly while tenure is held. It is the industry view that once the tenure has been surrendered (post life of mine), any interpretive data provided to government should be released. Industry acknowledges that at a point in the future, a person/government/company would benefit in understanding the previous interpretations and assumptions made. However, given the commercial sensitivity of interpretive data, industry's position is this information is provided through the final report to government on surrender/relinquishment of the tenure. Regardless, interpretive models can be developed from the raw data made available during the life of the tenure.

CONFIDENTIALITY PERIOD

The attached table outlines that for all raw geoscience data, industry proposes a five-year confidentiality period from the annual report date. Industry's view is this timeframe provides a good balance for growth as well as security of investment.

Some members did express a view to impose different confidentiality periods – QRC and AMEC received submissions for two years as well as 10 years. Majority members agreed a five year confidentiality period is a good balance.

Industry would like to see an extensive mechanism employed for instances where companies have a higher form of tenure in application and don't have certainty of retention for the higher tenure yet. The higher tenure's data would be protected if granted.

PROJECT PLANNING FOR STAGED IMPLEMENTATION IN 2021

To be clear, industry's position applies to all exploration data held under exploration permits and mineral develop licences. After consultations between the Department and QRC, it was agreed that further work be undertaken by the Department on data held under production leases.

QRC and AMEC recommend a staged approach to this reform, however suggests each stage be in close succession to reduce prolonged administrative burden on companies through the transition. Industry would like to see a detailed project plan on each stage, including regulation amendments, revision of the Guideline, template development and testing and final stage implementation. A detailed project plan will assist industry to engage in each step of the process as well as have company systems in place to adequately respond to the data reporting changes. This project plan should also deal with more complex issues such as project reporting, conditional surrenders and overlapping tenements.

Industry supports the Department's suggestion for the go-live date to remain 1 July 2020, with a six-month transitional period until 1 January 2021. It is industry's understanding the new guidelines and regulations will be mandatory from 1 January 2021.

OPPORTUNITY TO REDUCE DUPLICATIVE REPORTING

Industry understands various government departments require the same information for different purposes and requests that every effort should be made to ensure companies are reporting their data only once.

One current example is the water quality data requested in the Guidelines. The requirement to report water quality data needs further discussion and clarification. It is industry's understanding this data is already provided to government through the Department of Environment and Science.

QRC members are pleased the Guidelines provide an opportunity to reduce duplicative reporting requirements. One area of opportunity is the new Progressive Rehabilitation and Closure Plans (PRCP) to also provide this data to the Department. This will ensure the Department is then only asking for information not previously provided elsewhere to undertake any necessary assessment.

Across all commodities, QRC and AMEC are seeking a commitment to reduce duplicative reporting from the Department across the following areas:

- Geological Survey of Queensland
- Environment and Science (DES)
- Health and Safety
- Office of Groundwater Impact Assessment
- Operational hubs

TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

The majority of industry participants involved in this consultation process expressed concern for the Department's proposed transitional arrangement of any data older than the confidentiality period is released publicly. While this approach may be acceptable to a few companies, there was overwhelming industry support for alternative opt-in arrangements:

Re-submit historical data

A company can resubmit, within a transitional timeframe, some or all previously submitted data. The data is to be resubmitted in the new Guideline format.

This option provides a high degree of certainty for the company that commercially sensitive data remains confidential. This option is also highly beneficial to the users of the data as it will be resubmitted in the most accessible format.

Redaction facility

A mechanism to redact commercially sensitive data from already submitted reports. This approach is the facility used in New South Wales.

Industry further suggests a redaction facility be employed going forward under the new arrangements in exceptional circumstances where it can be evidenced that the data is highly commercial and should not be made public.

Conversely, it is recognised by industry that there are numerous company reports held by the Department which have little or no commercial value or sensitivity due to their age or location. Further consultation could be held to determine an acceptable date for which all reports older than that date could be made open file.

NEXT STEPS

A lot of discussion was held on how to report under the new GDMP system. Similar to the petroleum reporting work, the coal and mineral industry are keen for the Department to run a few focused workshops on refining the templates (the 'how' to report piece). Industry also suggests the Department organise a number of well publicised workshops in Brisbane and regional centres (e.g. Emerald, Moranbah, Townsville, Mt Isa) to ensure there is plenty of opportunity for report submitters to understand the reporting requirements, the formats and the process. These workshops should include the opportunity for participants to prepare a report for submission using dummy data and logins provided by the Department.