

Paydirt Nickel Conference opened by Minister Moore



The nickel sector is still very important to all West Australians, and represents the State's sixth most important resources sector in terms of value of production, according to Mines and Petroleum Minister Norman Moore.

Minister Moore made the comment at the launch of the Paydirt Nickel Conference held in Perth this week (Oct 14-15), which attracted hundreds of delegates.

He said the nickel industry recorded sales of \$3 billion in 2008-09.

"While this is a drop in value for the sector from third in Western Australia in the previous financial year, this is still a very significant figure," Mr Moore said.

Currently there are eight operating nickel producers, a drop from 12 in the last year, however, WA still produces about 15 per cent of the world's nickel output.

"Nickel is of enormous importance to the State in terms of investment and employment in regional areas. And, of course, there are the royalties from nickel mining, with these contributing almost \$120 million in the last calendar year," Mr Moore said.

He said the future of the industry would be assisted by the State Government's Exploration Incentive Scheme (EIS) which has received three successful applications this year for companies drilling for nickel.

The EIS is funded by Royalties for Regions, and represents an investment by Government of \$80 million over a five year period to assist the exploration industry.

The scheme is aimed at encouraging minerals, petroleum and geothermal exploration, particularly in greenfields areas of the State.

The Department of Mines and Petroleum's (DMP) Geological Survey Division also participated in this year's Paydirt Nickel Conference by manning an exhibition booth.

The aims of the exercise were to promote encourage new investment in Western Australia's nickel industry, promote the Exploration Incentive Scheme (EIS) to industry representatives, and demonstrate DMP products and services.

Geological Survey is also one of the conference sponsors, along with CSIRO and Geoscience Australia.

Mineral Resources manager Dr Ivor Roberts also presented a talk on 'Nickel in Western Australia – Exploration Incentive Scheme'.

The annual conference, now in its 16th year, attracts a range of delegates ranging from financiers, industry analysts and industry bodies including the Association of Mining and Exploration Companies (AMEC) and the WA Chamber of Minerals and Energy (CMEWA).

The State Government, through DMP, is implementing a raft of initiatives to help capitalise on the next major upswing in economic activity, which will have a direct impact on the nickel sector.

“DMP has been working to overhaul the approvals process for new exploration and production activities to achieve a more simplified, interactive and faster system of assessments for new projects,” DMP Director General Richard Sellers said.

“We have also been rolling out a number of systems to make project assessments easier and more interactive for industry, covering such areas as environmental, mineral title and petroleum and geothermal tenure assessments.

“This will allow industry to track their applications online and see where they are in the assessment process.”

He said as well as increasing transparency, this would improve resource allocation within the department.

“Another initiative has resulted in the department now publishing compliance with its assessment timelines on our website, which has revealed considerable progress made in the time taken to process applications,” Mr Sellers said.

“The number of pending WA mining tenement applications has also continued to fall and now stands at 8,900, less than half of the peak of almost 19,000 two years ago.”