

MINERALS REGULATION

ANNUAL REPORT 2025-2026

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Government of South Australia
Department for Energy and Mining

energymining.sa.gov.au

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HIGHLIGHTS 2025–26



97 New exploration and mining tenement applications assessed



154 Exploration and mining programs approved



354 Exploration and mining inspections



1201 Opal tenement inspections



144 Exploration and mining reports received



48 Complaints and incidents received and actioned



$454 million Mineral royalties collected

South Australia's mineral resources include some of the best ore bodies in the world. The government recognises this sector's contribution to the current and future economic prosperity of the state, through business investment, regional development, employment opportunities and skills growth. These factors must be balanced against appropriate environmental and social objectives.

The Department for Energy and Mining (DEM), through its Minerals Regulation Branch and Resource Tenure Branch, is responsible for the effective regulation of South Australia's mineral resources sector. The department ensures that mining and exploration operations are conducted within a risk-based, outcomes-focused regulatory framework. Regulatory oversight is undertaken in accordance with approval conditions, with a strong emphasis on achieving outcomes that are specific, measurable, clear, and enforceable.

Our role is to regulate the full lifecycle of mining from exploration, through project development to formal application and assessment. Where a mine receives approval, we continue to oversee operations throughout the life of the mine and ultimately rehabilitation and mine closure.

We ensure that government regulatory expectations are clear, and appropriate regulatory action, using a range of compliance and enforcement tools, is taken where operations are not compliant with their lease or licence conditions.

This process ensures that the regulatory approach undertaken at each stage is clear, consistent, transparent and fair for all stakeholders, and in the public interest.



REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

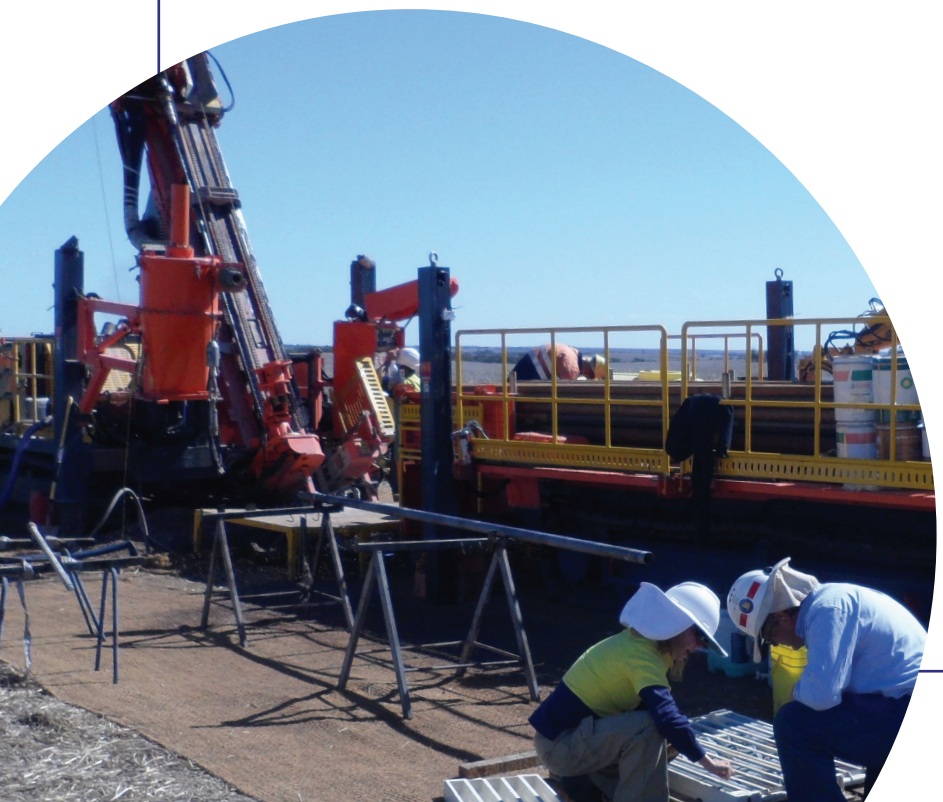
DEM's published Regulatory Practice Statement sets out the regulatory frameworks that we administer and operate under, and the way that we discharge our regulatory responsibilities and functions through the application of our regulatory principles and approach.

The Statement establishes how we achieve a consistent, risk-based approach to regulation while meeting the requirements of our regulatory obligations including the expectations of the people of South Australia.

DEM works closely with the Environment Protection Authority (EPA), SafeWork SA and the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) to co-regulate South Australia's mineral resources sector.

Associated legislation:

- *Mining Act 1971*
- *Mines and Works Inspection Act 1920*
- *Offshore Minerals Act 2000*
- *Roxby Downs (Indenture Ratification) Act 1982*
- *Broken Hill Proprietary Company's Indenture Act 1937*
- *Opal Mining Act 1995*
- *Whyalla Steel Works Act 1958*



REGULATORY PRINCIPLES

Our regulatory principles underpin the legislation that we administer and regulatory frameworks that we operate under, with direction provided by the Parliament of South Australia and the Minister.

The following regulatory principles guide our work:

Risk based and outcomes focused

Education and engagement

Effective, efficient and flexible

Proportionate compliance and enforcement

Impartial decision making

Procedural fairness, natural justice and transparency

Commitment to continuous improvement

These regulatory principles guide our approach to regulatory decision-making, underpin how we operate in the public interest with fairness and impartiality, and encourage a psychologically safe and ethical workplace.

The principles are aligned with South Australian Public Sector Values, and the DEM Strategic Plan.



ANNUAL REGULATION PRIORITIES

In 2026-27, DEM Minerals Regulation will focus on the following priorities:

Delivering the next phase of the Mining and Energy Regulation System (MERS), including new regulatory compliance and inspection capabilities.

Commencing implementation of Regional EPEPRs to streamline exploration operational approvals.

Working with industry and stakeholders to develop clearer, simplified guidance on commonly raised regulatory matters, including land access requirements, exempt land provisions, and REST (renewal, expiry, surrender and transfer) application processes.

Publishing the findings and recommendations from DEM's 2026 statewide social research program on stakeholder perceptions and concerns relating to mining, quarrying and energy developments.

Continuing collaboration with state, territory and Commonwealth regulators on shared regulatory issues, including Aboriginal heritage, Native Title, land access, and assessment and approval processes.

Strengthening regulatory oversight and compliance outcomes across the resources sector, with a particular focus on:

Refusing applications to renew mineral tenements where approved work programs and other regulatory obligations are not being met.

Enforcement of expenditure commitments in accordance with *Minerals Regulatory Guideline MG33 Mineral exploration licences* including the cancellation of licences where warranted.

Applying appropriate compliance and enforcement action in response to unauthorised mining activities.

Publishing guidance on the role of Authorised Officers and the use of body-worn cameras during compliance and inspection activities.

Working with industry, landholders and communities to support social licence, effective engagement and community participation in resource development.

CASE STUDY

Ai Assisted Mining Assessment Trial

In early 2026 the Department embarked on a pilot trial using artificial intelligence (AI) to assist in the assessment of mining lease applications, specifically for quarries. The goal was to trial the effectiveness of AI as a tool to enhance the assessment process and reduce assessment timeframes from submission to a final decision.

The Department has already invested in foundational digital capability through initiatives such as MERS and broader digital transformation programs. These provide a platform to:

Integrate enhanced automation and decision-support capabilities

Improve data accessibility and reuse

Enable more advanced analytics and AI-driven functionality

In partnership with LOFTYAI, the department secured funding through the South Australian Government's GO2GOV – Unmatched Solution Testing Pathway (G2G) grant, supporting the development and trial of a fit-for-purpose solution. The trial focused on mid-tier hard rock quarry applications, enabling targeted testing of its capability to streamline the assessment process.

Phase 1 of the trial focused on collaborative development of a tool to enhance the departments review of mining proposals against the relevant terms of reference called Application Assessor. The tool reads the proposal, checks whether required information has been provided, notes any gaps, giving a percentage score and highlights areas needing further review.

The trial demonstrated that validity assessments could be reduced from two weeks to one day for large complex proposals. If the tool were to be made available to industry, proponents could check their own documents before submitting knowing they would meet requirements, avoiding requests for further information which add cost and time to the process.

88% **faster mid-tier validity assessments**
2 weeks to 1 day

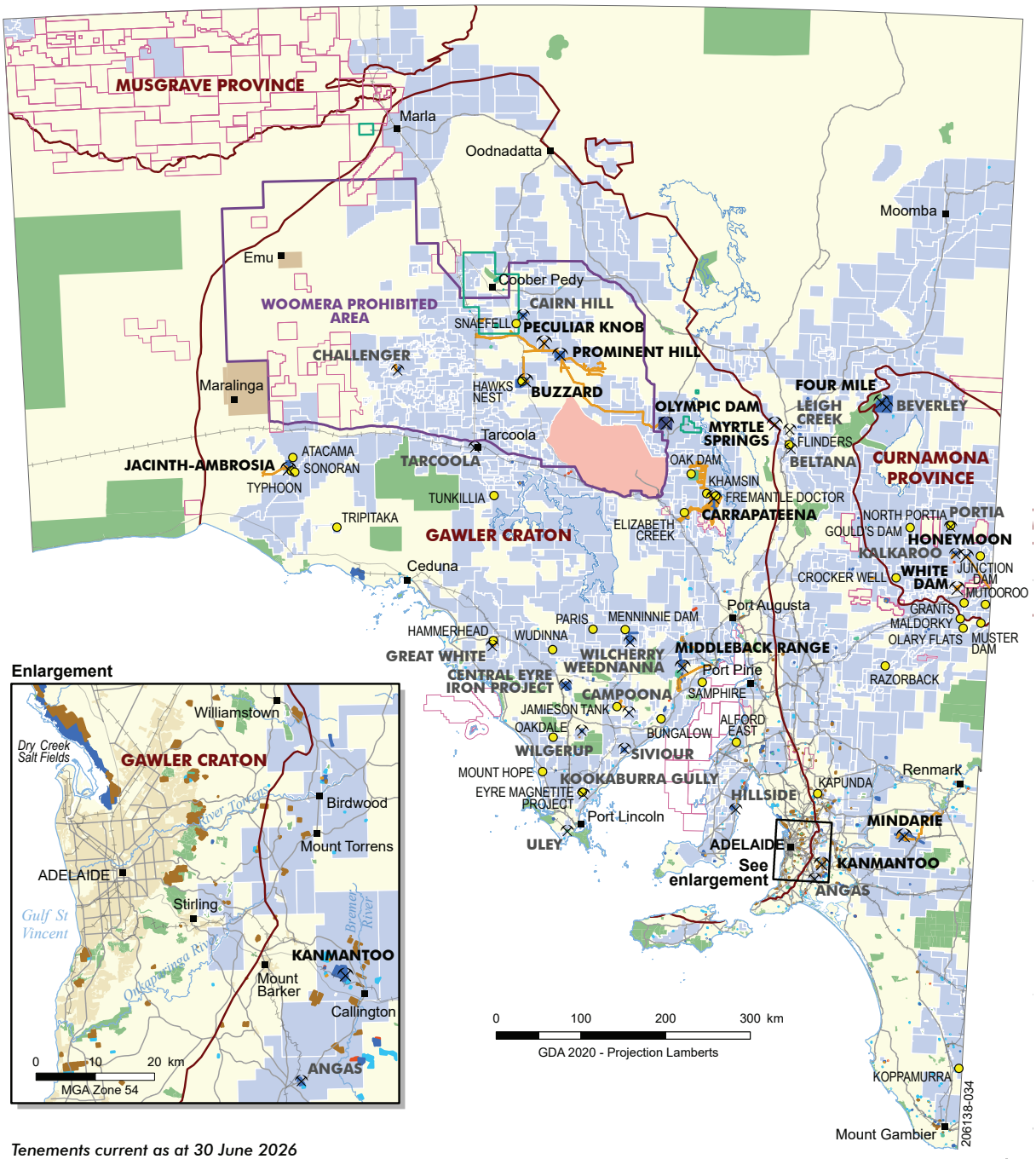
75% **faster validity major mine assessments**
1 month to 1 week

80% **less admin per application**
Projected saving 77 weeks a year

Phase 2 of the trial introduced the Impact Assessor tool which analyses the impact assessment component of the mining proposal against standard impacts, controls and outcomes pre-loaded by department. It also checks for inconsistencies between the impact assessment, broader proposal and technical appendices. The trial demonstrated excellent potential with this tool, with further work proposed to incorporate it in the assessment process.

DEM are now working on a pathway to operationalise Application Assessor for use within existing systems and to further develop Impact Assessor with the ultimate aim of reducing assessment timeframes, increasing consistency and supporting further industry growth in both the quarry and mining sectors.

ACTIVE TENEMENTS



Enlargement

Tenements current as at 30 June 2026

Mineral tenements

- Exploration licence application (ELA)
- Exploration licence (EL)
- Extractive minerals lease (EML)
- Mineral claim (MC)
- Mineral lease (ML)
- Miscellaneous purposes licence (MPL)
- Private mine (PM)
- Retention lease (RL)
- Special mining lease (SML)

Major mines

- Operating time
- Approved mine or mine in care and maintenance
- Mining project

Topographic features

- Locality
- Highway
- Secondary road
- Railway
- Major lake

No mineral access

- Defence Continuous Use Zone
- National parks and reserves
- Former test site
- Woomera Prohibited Area (WPA)
- Precious Stones Field

DATA DASHBOARD FY 2025-26

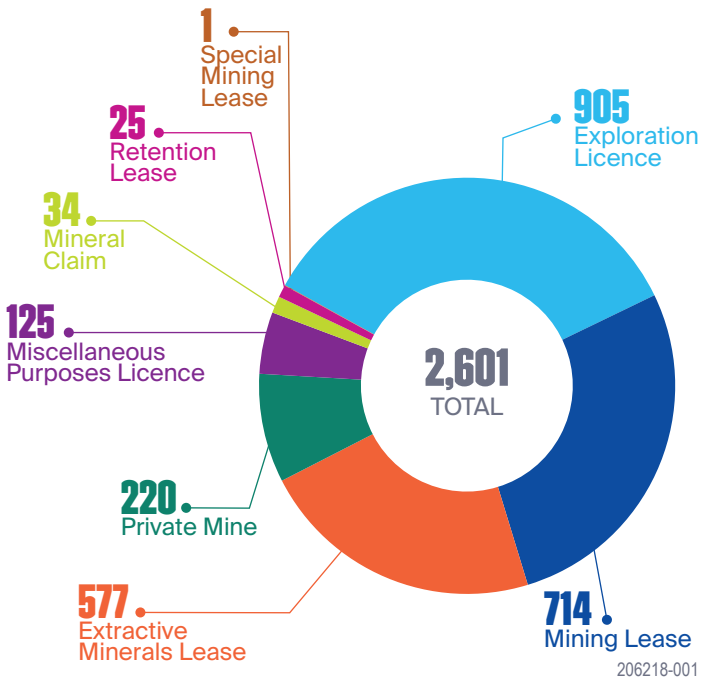
MINERAL TENEMENTS OVERVIEW

ACTIVE TENEMENTS

At 30 June 2026, there were 2,601 active tenements in South Australia. This includes 905 exploration licences (EL) and 625 operating mines and quarries, which in this report are defined as those that have submitted a royalty return to DEM in the past three years.

1 The concept of lease classes (mineral leases and extractive mineral leases) was abolished by the 2021 legislative reforms of the Mining Act, replaced by a single tenure type, mining leases. For the purpose of this reporting, mining leases with extractive minerals as primary mineral is reported under extractive minerals lease.

Active tenements by type as at 30 June 2026

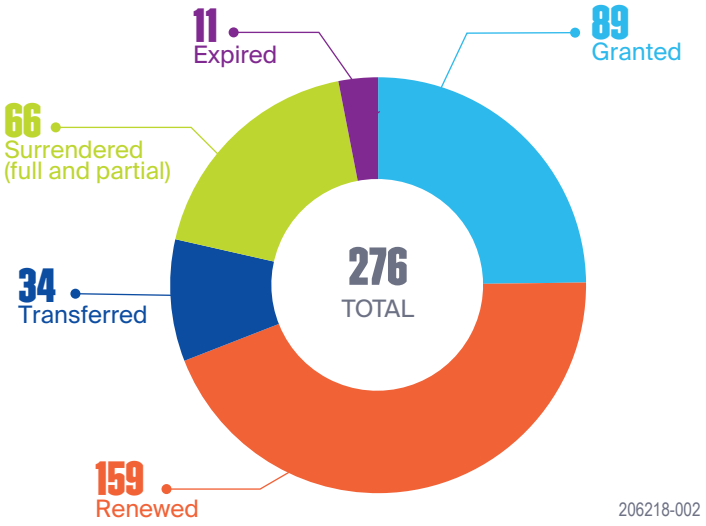


206218-001

TENEMENTS PROCESSED

In total, 89 mineral tenements were granted, 159 mineral tenements renewed, 34 mineral tenements transferred, 66 mineral tenements surrendered (including 9 partial mineral tenements surrendered) and 11 mineral tenements expired.

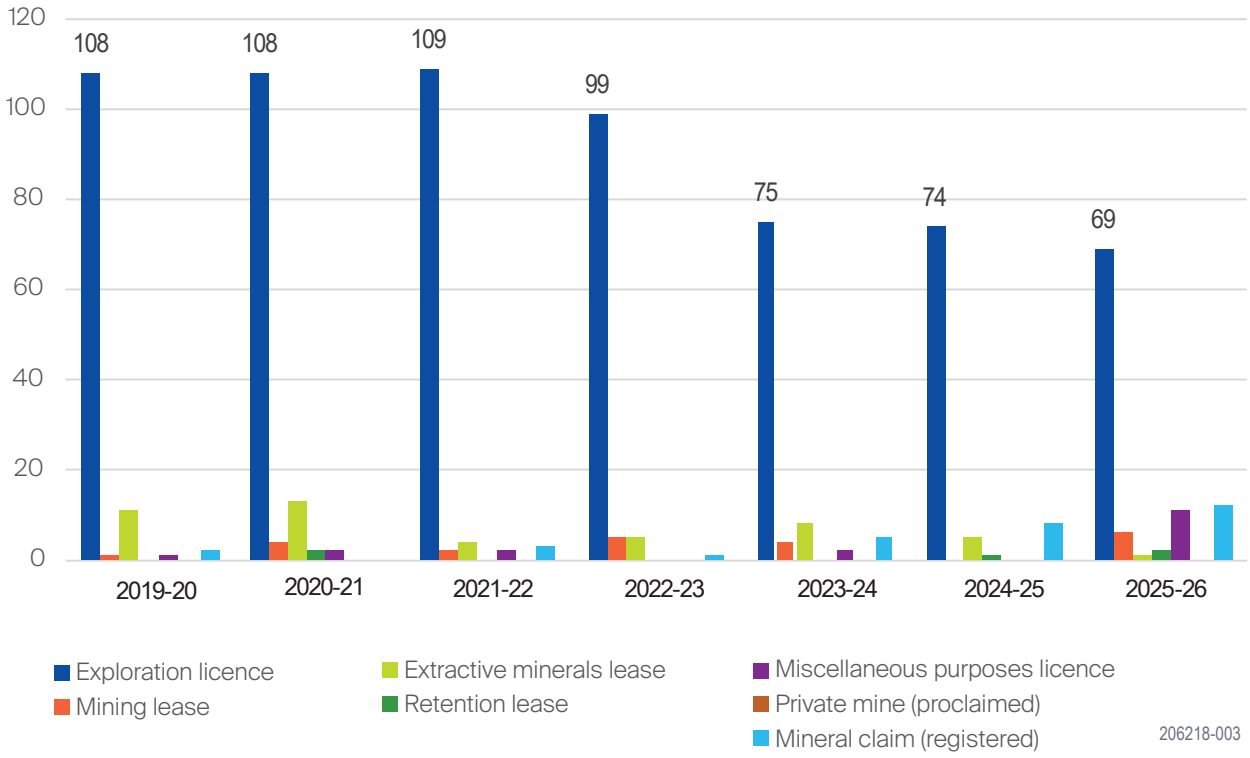
Tenements Processed FY 2025-26



206218-002

The volume of ELs granted has reduced over the past three years following the legislative amendments removing the requirement to lodge a new EL (Subsequent EL) every 5 years. This was replaced by the requirement to lodge an EL renewal every 6 years up to a maximum of 18 years. DEM is also implementing a program in 2026-27 to focus on releasing relinquished ground through the ERA process and making more land available to industry.

Tenements processed by type FY 2019-20 to FY 2025-26



MINING REGISTER INSTRUMENTS

The Mining Register, established under Part 2A of the Mining Act, records any mineral tenements granted under the Mining Act, and their terms and conditions.

The Mining Register also includes, but is not limited to, instruments, agreements, determinations and dealings registered under the Mining Act.

The Mining Native Title Register is a statutory register under the Mining Act 1971 (SA) containing native title matters associated with mining: Mining Native Title Agreements, Court Determinations, ILUAs, Form 27 notices, Letters of Registration, Deeds of Assignment and Assumption, and other relevant instruments. This register can be searched free of charge from the MERS portal.

In 2026 DEM implemented a number of automation steps into the instrument registration process, resulting in a significant reduction to processing effort, which in turn will provide additional time for tenement officers to undertake other priority activities.

The volume of instruments registered is expected to vary year on year as it is dependent on the level of activity and types of applications received.

Instruments registered FY 2025-26

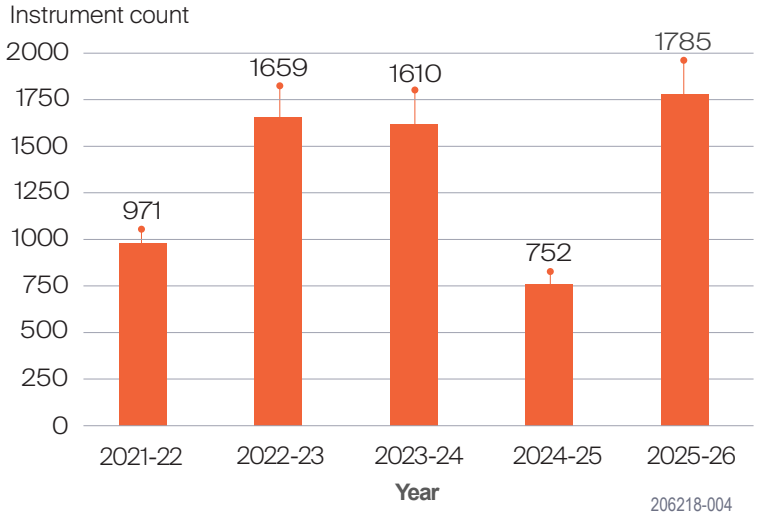
A total of 1,786 instruments were registered on the Mining Register during FY 2025–26.

Key instrument categories

Court action determinations	4
Court actions commenced	4
Program for environment protection and rehabilitation	102
Completed exploration and expenditure statements	85
Current bonds	32
Returned bonds	10
Dealings (Transfers or transfer of interest)	16
Notices issued	317
Registrable dealings	47

Instruments registered from January 2021 to June 2026

Instruments* registered on the mining register by year



*One instrument may relate to multiple tenements

FINANCIAL ASSURANCE

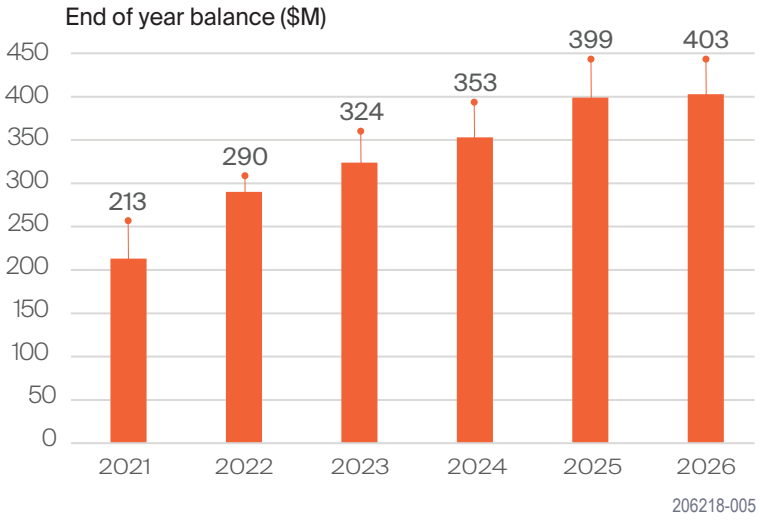
DEM is responsible for ensuring financial liabilities from unrehabilitated mining and exploration operations do not become the state's responsibility. The Mining Act provides a mechanism to ensure there are sufficient funds set aside to meet these potential liabilities in the form of financial assurance in the form of rehabilitation bonds.

As of 30 June 2026, the total amount of bonds held amounted to $403 million.

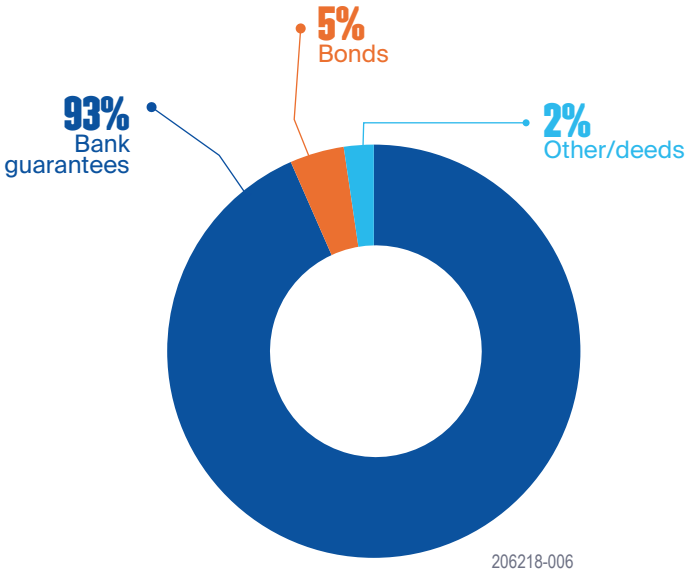
The bond to be provided by the tenement holder is determined to be the value of 100% of the estimated rehabilitation liability. Acceptable forms of bond include bank guarantee, insurance bond or cash.

More information on financial assurance can be found on the financial assurance page of the DEM website.

Invoices for mineral tenements rent to FY 2025-26



Type of security held by the state



EXTRACTIVE AREAS REHABILITATION FUND

The extractive areas rehabilitation fund (EARF) was established in 1971 to fund the rehabilitation of extractive mining operations. It has supported more than 1,000 projects since its inception.

Extractive operations generally do not require a rehabilitation bond. The EARF is a royalty-financed scheme that protects the state against operators who cannot meet their rehabilitation obligations due to financial disruption such as voluntary administration, liquidation, insolvency, or bankruptcy.

The EARF also provides funding to support regulatory officers who work on extractive mineral leases and extractive operations as well as implementation of measures designed to help mitigate environmental damage in extractives operations. The EARF is regularly reviewed by government to ensure adequate reserves are held to assure potential rehabilitation liabilities may be funded, if required, by government.

In addition to the projects commenced and/or completed in the period identified in this report, an annual contribution is provided from the EARF to support the regulation of mining operations by DEM.

The closing balance of the EARF as of 30 June 2026 was $37,352,000.

More information about the Extractive Areas Rehabilitation Fund (EARF) can be found on the DEM website.

Projects approved for funding 2025–26

Project/tenement	Applicant	Approved	Value
Cunninghams Sand Pit (Bungama) (EML6012)	Cameron Green	23/03/2026	$161,606

Status of EARF-funded projects 30 June 2026

Project/tenement	Original approval	Value	Completed	Residual value
Bungama (EML6012)	23/03/2026	$161,606	Ongoing	$3,138.76
Bells Lane Sand Pit (PM253)	05/03/2025	$1,168,200	Defects liability period	$49,318
Brambles Quarry (EML4663)	3/07/2024	$47,195	Completed	$0
The Bluff Quarry (EML2983)	23/02/2024	$176,000	Completed	$0

CASE STUDY

EARF: Cunninghams Sandpit, Bungama (EML 6012), Compton

The Minerals Regulation team undertook a successful EARF rehabilitation project in 2026 at Bungama, near Port Pirie.

The Cunninghams Sandpit (EML 6012) was established in 1998 for the extraction of sand over land owned by Cunningham Quarry Supplies Pty Ltd. The site was operated for the following 12 years with a total of 40,000 tonnes of sand being extracted.

The tenement was transferred to a new operator in 2015. However, the site was never subsequently worked and therefore no progressive rehabilitation was undertaken. Efforts to contact the new tenement holder were unsuccessful and the site effectively became abandoned. The site was characterised by steep, unstable quarry faces, as well as having been used for illegal dumping.

Land ownership was also transferred over this period, and the new landowner was left with an unsightly and potential hazardous former quarry on his property.

This site was deemed to qualify for a grant under the Extractive Areas Rehabilitation Fund. An earthworks contractor was engaged to remove wastes and impacts created by former mining activities and to reshape the area so that the landform blends into the surrounding topography.

An interesting challenge for this rehabilitation project was that over time, native vegetation had reestablished in the quarry faces.

Through consultation with the Department for Environment and Water and after payment into the Native Vegetation Fund, a small amount of native vegetation was removed to allow rehabilitation to be undertaken.

Earthworks have been completed, stabilising the site and making it safe for future seeding or pastoral uses. DEM will now work with the landowner to commence a revegetation program across the site.



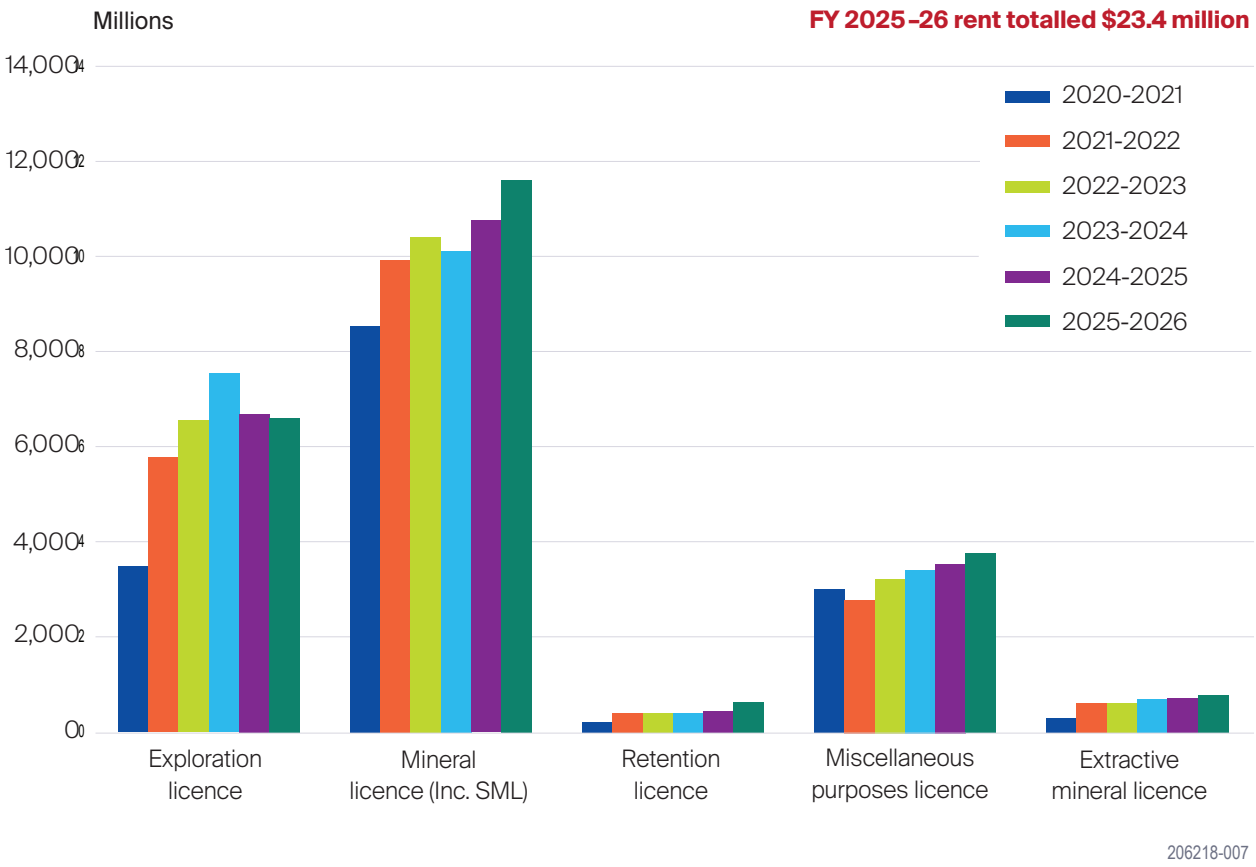
Before and after photos of Cunninghams Sandpit, Bungama EARF Project.

MINERAL TENEMENTS INVOICING

DEM issues invoices 12 months in advance for crown rent, freehold landowner rent, regulation and administration fees for each active tenement.

DEM raised a total value of $23.4 million in invoices across mineral tenements relating to rent during FY 2025–26. This represents a 5.6% increase on the $22.2m invoiced for the prior year. Administration and regulation fees totalled $818,000, up from $790,000 in the prior year.

Invoices raised across mineral tenements for rent from FY 2020–21 to 2025–26



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EXPLORATION SUMMARY

LICENCE ASSESSMENTS

497
ASSESSMENTS

EL = exploration licence

81	EL and exploration release area applications
2	ERA panel
94	EL renewal applications
173	EL Expenditure Returns
29	AEA Expenditure Returns
54	EL Area Reductions
48	EL Surrenders
1	EL retention status
15	EL transfers
0	EL division
0	EL cancellation

EPEPR ASSESSMENTS

147
ASSESSMENTS

58	approved 12-month
14	approved ongoing
10	withdrawn
65	Program Notifications (PN)

COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES

298
CHECKS

0	formal letters issued
152	compliance reports received
144	compliance reports assessed
2	incidents
0	complaint

INSPECTIONS AND COMMUNITY MEETINGS

34
INSPECTIONS/MEETINGS

34	site inspections
0	community meetings

EXPLORATION REPORTING

1,300
REPORTS

509	annual technical reports
34	surrender reports
1	partial surrender reports
756	annual activity summaries

EXPLORATION DATA

53
DATA RELEASES

39	surrender and partial surrender datasets
14	historical data releases comprising 24 exploration licences

EXPLORATION ASSESSMENTS AND OPERATIONAL APPROVALS

During FY 2025–26 exploration within the state focused on a range of mineral commodities. Based on exploration data collected by the department, most exploration spending was incurred in the search for copper, copper-gold, uranium and iron ore. Increased spending compared to previous years also occurred for lithium and uranium, with heavy mineral sand and rare earth element expenditure remaining steady.

Most exploration took place in the Gawler Craton, followed by Curnamona Craton and the Adelaide Geosyncline.

Exploration licence applications and assessments

A total of 443 exploration assessments were completed during the period. These included assessments for new EL applications, exploration release areas (ERAs), expenditure returns, EL renewals, EL transfers, surrenders (including partial surrenders) and retention status.

The number of assessments per year and different types going back to 2021-22 (post Mining Act amendments) are detailed in the figure below.

The overall number of assessments completed during the year was lower than in the previous two years, reflecting the transition to MERS and associated assessment backlogs. However, assessment timeframes are improving, with significant reductions in processing times for ELAs (33%), renewals (36%) and expenditure returns (23%) lodged through MERS. Notably, 95% of ELAs submitted through MERS were assessed within the target timeframe.

Reduction in assessment timeframes

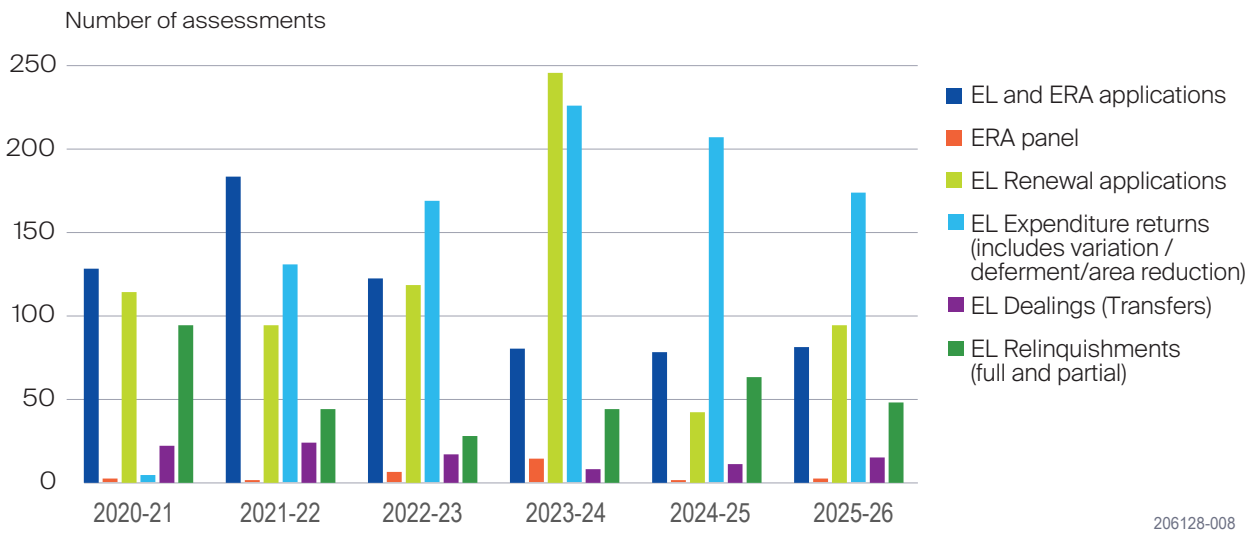
33% Exploration Licence applications (ELA)

36% Exploration renewals

23% Exploration expenditure returns

Of the 42 that closed during FY 2025-26, 13 ERAs received competing applications, 12 received single applications, and 17 received no applications.

Exploration Licence Assessments over time



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Exploration operational approvals and compliance activities

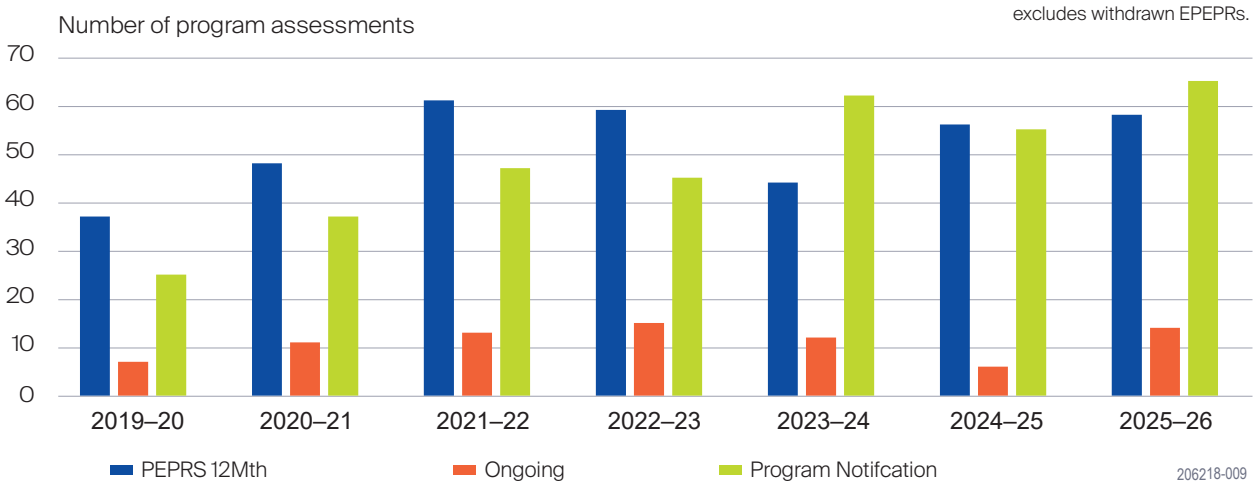
During the reporting period, a total of 72 Exploration Programs for Environment Protection and Rehabilitation (EPEPR) assessments were completed. This included 58 12-month assessments, 14 ongoing assessments. In addition to the 72 EPEPRs assessed, 65 program notifications (notifications associated with with ongoing EPEPRs) were assessed.

Overall, the figures show ongoing EPEPR assessments remained consistent with the 7-year period (ranging from 6 to 15), with the number of program notifications showing an upward trend.

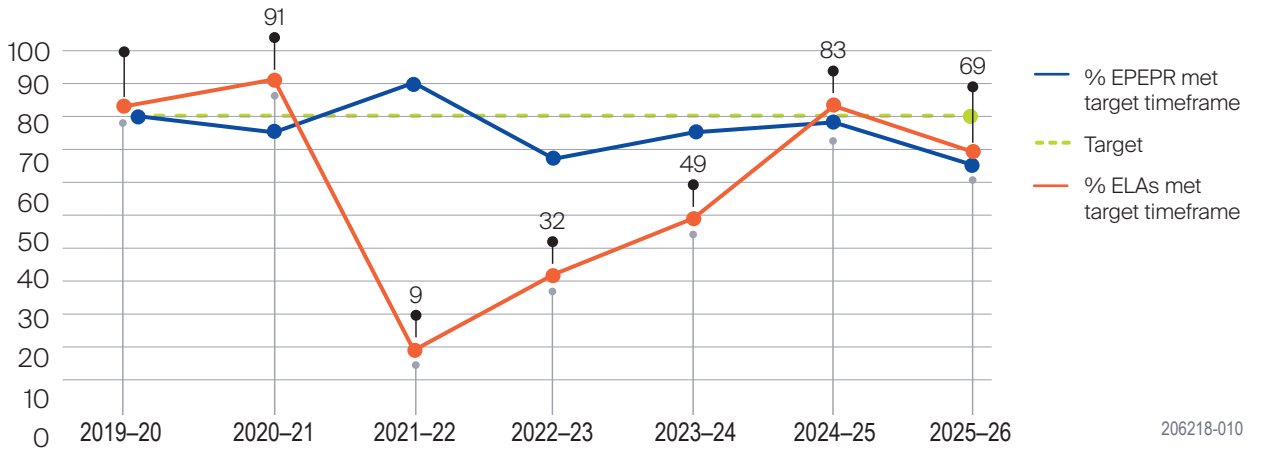
In addition to the assessment of operational approvals, 34 site inspections were conducted across 29 tenement holders, and 152 compliance reports received.

The reduction in EPEPR and ELA assessment performance compared with the previous

Exploration program assessments 2019–2026



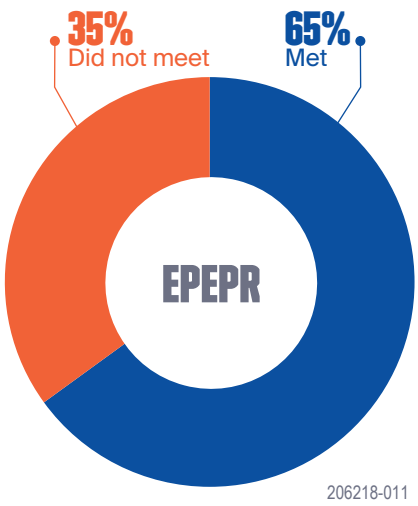
Exploration ELA and EPEPR assessment timeframes against target

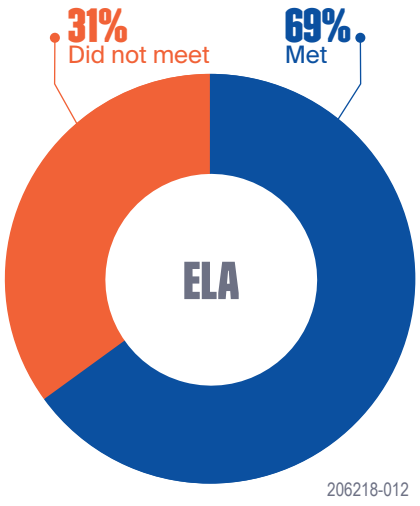


year reflects the workload associated with the implementation of MERS, and challenges with the EPEPR module that temporarily increased workload and assessment timeframes. DEM expects ELA performance to exceed target timeframes in 2026-27 as all new applications will be submitted through MERS, noting that 95% of ELA applications submitted through MERS met the target assessment timeframe. EPEPR assessment performance is also expected to improve following the release of the Northern Gawler Regional EPEPR and the ongoing resolution of MERS implementation challenges.

EXPLORATION REPORTING AND DATA RELEASE

Exploration (ELA and EPEPR) assessments against target timeframes





Open-file release of company exploration reports and associated data

The Mining Act requires exploration companies to provide DEM with the exploration data generated on an exploration licence, at the tenement's surrender or partial surrender. The data is made publicly available on the South Australian Resources Information Gateway (SARIG) as a central resource for the sector.

During the period, 43 surrender and partial surrendered datasets and 8 releases of historical data were uploaded to SARIG for public access.

Exploration reporting FY 2025–26

EXPLORATION REPORTING	NUMBER REVIEWED
Exploration licence annual activity summary reports	756
Exploration licence annual technical reports	379
Joint annual technical reports*	80
Exploration licence surrenders	34
Exploration licence partial surrenders	1
Total	**1,300**

*Reports cover multiple exploration licences

MINING SUMMARY

1,696 ACTIVE TENEMENTS

Tenements at 30 June 2026 including:

- **714** mining leases
- **577** extractive mining leases
- **220** private mines
- **125** miscellaneous purposes licences
- **34** mineral claims
- **25** retention leases
- **1** special mining lease

57 MINING ASSESSMENTS

Mining tenement application and programs assessed:

- **7** mining lease applications
- **9** miscellaneous purposes licence
- **5** change in operation applications
- **34** programs (PEPR and/or MOP)
- **2** Retention Leases

12 ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Compliance and enforcement tools used:

- **9** formal directions
- **1** proposed non-renewals
- **1** notice non-compliance
- 1 PEPR Review

28 MINING COMPLAINTS

- **9** dust complaints
- **2** noise complaints
- **1** non-compliance complaints
- **16** all other complaints (blasting, water quality, flora/fauna, physical integrity, spill, fire, visual amenity and traffic)

676 COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES AND COMMUNITY MEETINGS

- **311** Compliance reports received
- 354 mining inspections
- **11** community meetings attended
- **0** illegal mining inspections received and assessed

20 MINING INCIDENTS

- **14** spill incidents
- **1** WHS incidents*
- **4** all other incidents – (fire, physical integrity, water quality, spill, flora/fauna and non-compliance)
- **1** dust incident

*referred to Safework SA

Scoping

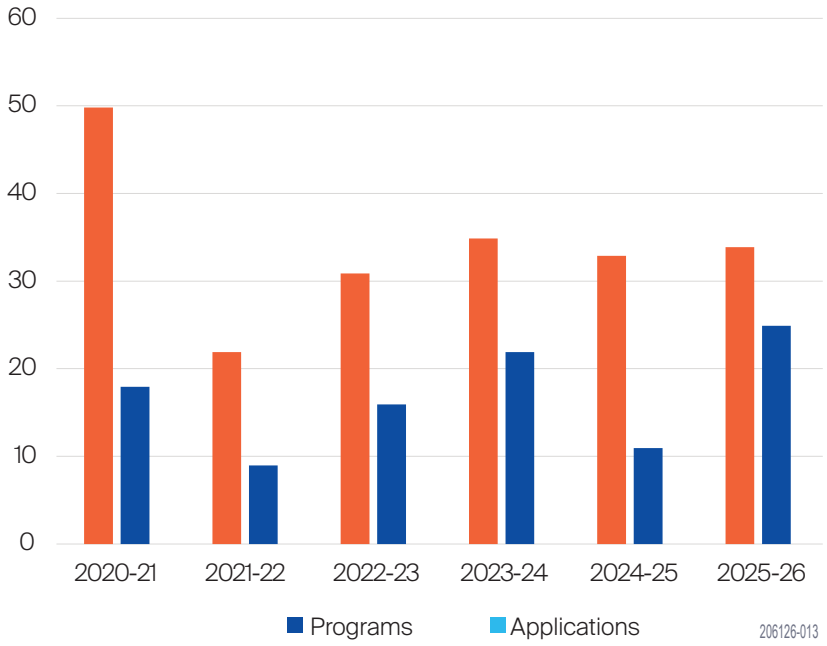
During the period DEM endorsed two Final Scoping Reports (AR3 Koppamurra Project and Coda Minerals Elizabeth Creek Project).

DEM are currently progressing four proponents through the full scoping process and two through a hybrid process where the tool is used to inform the level of detail for specific requirements of the Terms of Reference.

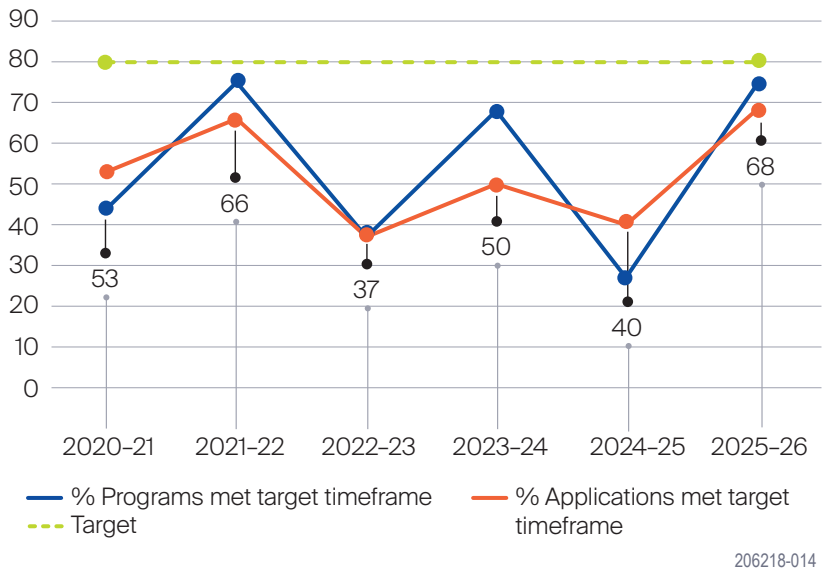
Assessments completed and timeframes

Over the last six years the number of application assessments completed by DEM has remained relatively consistent. DEM recognises the complexity of applications is not reflected when measuring volume and that, in some cases, one major assessment can be equivalent to five smaller quarry assessments. The FY 2020-21 period saw a high volume of program assessments completed with the majority being for quarries, reflecting the uptake in the defined impact template process. This also corresponded with some major infrastructure and road upgrade projects which led to an influx of new quarry applications and program reviews to allow for supply into these projects.

Application and program assessments 2020–2026



Mining application and program timeframes against target



During FY 2025-26, DEM completed a total of 59 assessments including 2 scoping reports, 18 applications, 34 programs and 5 change in operations.

Assessment timeframes improved from the last reporting period with 74% of Programs (FY24-25 27%) and 68% of applications (FY24-25 40%) meeting their respective target timeframes. DEM attributes this change to efficiencies in process gained by the new MERS system and re-allocation of resources from MERS testing and development back to assessments. Change in Operations applications vary significantly in their complexity which impacts on their assessment timeframes.

DEM expect further reductions in processing timeframes for the next reporting period through MERS and other initiatives.

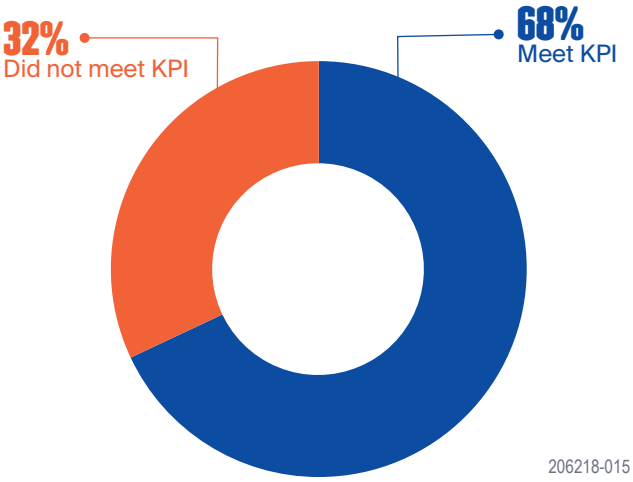
Of the 59 assessments, 7 were determined invalid and not accepted for assessment as they did not meet the minimum requirements set out by the respective TOR. DEM recommends that all submissions are checked against relevant TORs prior to submission to avoid delays to the process.

13 applications were withdrawn by applicants or tenement holders prior to completion. Applications are withdrawn for a variety of reasons and, in most cases, required the allocation of DEM resources to progress the assessment until the applications were withdrawn. For this reason, DEM does not refund assessment fees for withdrawn applications.

Transparency

In addition to making approved programs available on the Mining Register, DEM publishes all approved mining and exploration programs on its website.

Application assessments against target timeframes



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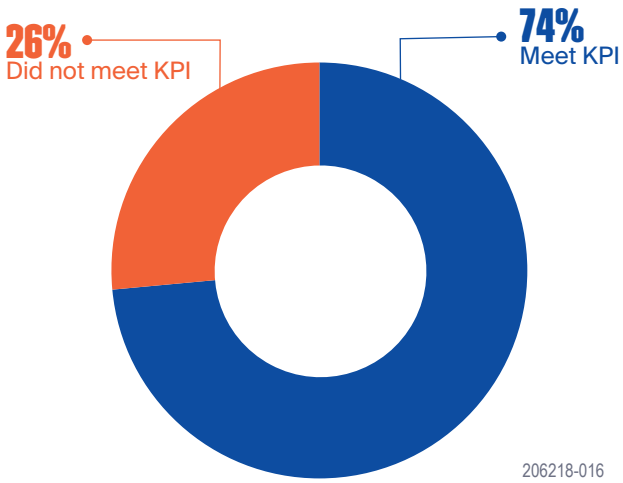
APPLICATIONS	
Endorsed	2
Granted	15
Refused	1
Withdrawn	2
Total	**20**

Program assessments against target timeframes



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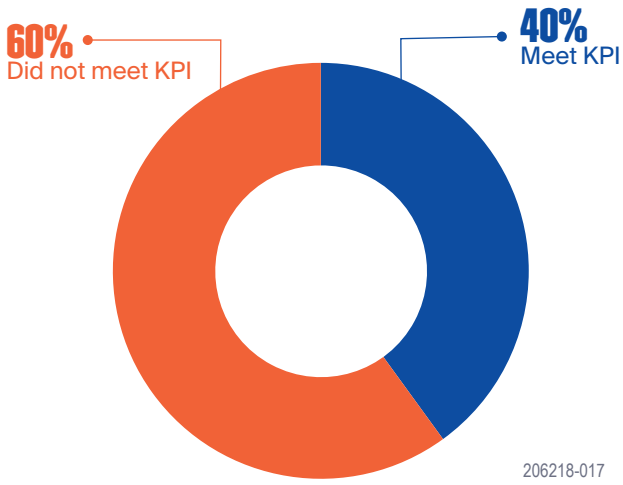
PROGRAMS	
Invalid	7
Approved	17
Withdrawn	10
Total	**34**

Change in Operations assessments against target timeframes



CHANGE IN OPERATIONS	
Withdrawn	1
Approved	4
Total	**5**

NATIVE VEGETATION CLEARANCE

During FY 2025-26 a total of 567.43 hectares was authorised to be cleared across 14 mining operations under DEM's delegation from the Native Vegetation Council.

Significant environmental benefit (SEB) was achieved through purchase of SEB credits from third party providers and a total of $5,210,310 of payments into the Native Vegetation Fund administered by the Native Vegetation Council.

OLYMPIC DAM

The Olympic Dam mine operates under the *Roxby Downs (Indenture Ratification) Act 1982* and the Olympic Dam and Stuart Shelf Indenture (the Indenture), which is a schedule to the Act.

Olympic Dam referrals and approvals under this legislation are coordinated by DEM as the lead regulatory agency.

100% of assessments relating to Olympic Dam met target timeframes in FY 2025–26.

Olympic Dam referrals and approvals, 30 June 2026

PROJECT DESCRIPTION	DETAILS	TIMELINE
Nut Coke Storage Facility	Installation of new storage facility	December 2025
Evaporation Pond 7, Cell C and D	Construction of new cells	January 2026
Olympic Dam Tailings Storage Facility 5 (TSF5) Buttress Program	Installation of buttress on TSF5	February 2026
Temporary Rock Storage Facility	Construct and operate a temporary rock storage facility	March 2026

COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

It is the tenement holder's responsibility to monitor their own compliance and demonstrate compliance to their stakeholders through public reporting.

DEM staff conduct compliance activities to provide assurance to the government, industry, community and other stakeholders that statutory requirements under the relevant Acts, regulations and conditions of approval are being adhered to and regularly monitored.

COMPLIANCE REPORTING

Compliance reporting provides assurance to the community, industry, government and other stakeholders that regulatory obligations are being met.

The Mining Act requires an annual compliance report to be submitted for authorised operations on an exploration licence, mineral claim, mining lease (authorised to produce extractive minerals or minerals), miscellaneous purposes licence and retention lease.

Compliance reports received

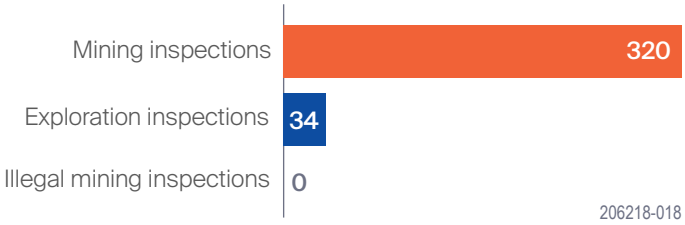
COMPLIANCE REPORT	NUMBER
Exploration compliance report received	152
Mining compliance report received	311
TOTAL	463

COMPLIANCE INSPECTIONS

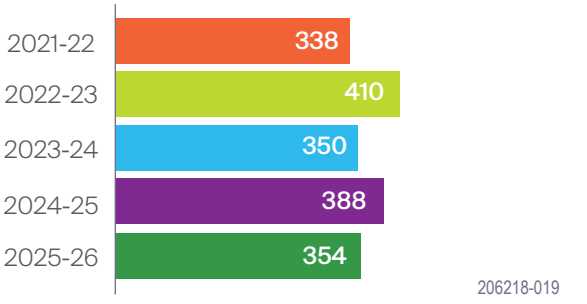
All major mines and other exploration and mining operations in South Australia are subject to regular scheduled and un-announced site inspections. DEM also conducts regular inspections with co-regulatory agencies such as the Environment Protection Authority, SafeWork SA or the Department for Environment and Water.

During FY 2025–26, 354 inspections were conducted with a majority (90%) relating to mining operations.

Inspections by type for FY 2025-2026



Number of inspections conducted during FY 2020–2021 to 2025–2026

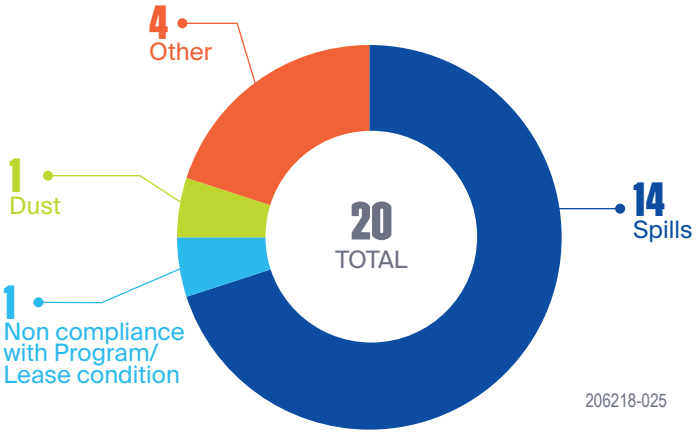


COMPLAINTS AND INCIDENTS

During FY 2025–26, DEM received 28 complaints with a majority associated with dust related issues. Dust is primarily a concern during the summer months, where rain is scarce and conditions are dry. Blasting and water quality are the other key issues noted. DEM officers monitor these issues closely with operators, and ensure directions are issued where mitigations are not adequate.

There were 20 incidents reported during FY 2025–26 for mining and exploration. The main incidents reported were spills. More information about the types of incidents that must be reported, how and when can be found on the Incident reporting page of the DEM website.

Number of incidents by type FY 2025–26



Complaints by type FY 2025–26


Dust **9**


Water quality **5**


Noise **2**


Other **9**


Non compliance lease conditions **1**


Rehabilitation **2**

COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT TOOLS ISSUED

Enforcement actions are made publicly available in this report and on DEM's website to ensure transparency of the scope and scale of DEM's enforcement activities. This also assists in delivering the important task of ensuring general and specific deterrence for the mining industry for offences under the relevant legislation, in accordance with the public interest.

Issued in FY 2025-26

TENEMENT HOLDER	TENEMENT NUMBER	ENFORCEMENT TOOL	DATE ISSUED	STATUS
Mineral Holding Pty Ltd	EML 5784	Compliance Direction	22/12/2025	Ongoing
Iluka (Eucla Basin) Pty Ltd	MPL 110	Environmental Direction	7/10/2025	Closed
Leigh Creek Copper Mine Pty Ltd	ML 5467	Environmental Direction	20/05/2026	Ongoing
Golden Cross Operations Ltd	EL 6500	Proposed Non-Renewal	23/09/2025	Closed
Holmes Civil Pty Ltd	EML 6274	Compliance Direction	19/05/2026	Ongoing
Noel Richard Barrett	EML 6342	Compliance Direction	30/03/2026	Closed
Sandyridge Holdings Pty Ltd	EML 5990	Compliance Direction	14/05/2026	Ongoing
Seelander Quarries Pty Ltd	EML 4695 and EML 6504	Compliance Direction	4/03/2026	Ongoing
Alan Harcourt Gibbons	EML 6203	Compliance Direction	10/06/2026	Ongoing
SWR Hindmarsh Valley Pty Limited	EML 5846	PEPR Review	15/06/2026	Ongoing
Alterdine (Australia) Pty Ltd	MC 4583	Emergency Direction	30/06/2026	Closed
John Mathew Williams	EML 5832	Notice of Non-compliance	1/04/2026	Ongoing

Closed in FY 2025-26

TENEMENT HOLDER	TENEMENT NUMBER	ENFORCEMENT TOOL	DATE ISSUED	STATUS
Red Rock Australasia Pty Ltd	EL 6947	Cancellation	25/07/2025	Closed
Boral	EML 6525	Proposed Suspension	3/06/2026	Closed
Michael John Wiseman	ML 6102	Compliance Direction	3/12/2025	Closed
Eric William Ross and Maureen Dorothy Ross (As trustees for E W & M D Ross Pty Ltd Staff Superannuation Fund)	EML 4493	Compliance Direction	6/05/2026	Closed
Hanson Construction Materials	PM 188	Compliance Order	6/05/2026	Closed
Buckland Dry Creek Pty Ltd	ML's 234, 235, 237, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 389, 390, 391, 392, 404, 405, 406, 416, 417, 418, 421, 429, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 587, 600, 605, 606, 607, 608, 617, 618, 702, 5205, 5206, 5207, 5208, 5209, 5210, 5908, 6514 and PM's 199 and 248	Environmental Direction	17/07/2025	Closed
Mark Hardy	EML 5918	Environmental Direction	13/05/2026	Closed
Mark Hardy	EML 6349	Compliance Direction	13/05/2026	Closed
Arrium Mining/One Steel Manufacturing Pty Limited (currently trading as SIMEC Mining)	MPL 74	Environmental Direction	20/05/2026	Closed

OPAL MINING

OPAL FIELDS PROGRAM FY 2025–26

Opal mining in South Australia is administered by DEM in accordance with the *Opal Mining Act 1995*. DEM's Opal Fields Program is based in Coober Pedy, with regional services provided to Andamooka and Mintabie.

The DEM Opal Fields Program is responsible for regulating opal mining tenements, with physical inspections carried out by Coober Pedy and Port Augusta based compliance officers.

There are three main opal fields in South Australia:

Coober Pedy – 5,000 km²

Andamooka – 260 km²

Mintabie – 215 km²

OPAL CLAIMS BY LOCATION

Active claims have increased since 2021 showing a strengthening interest in the opal mining industry. A significant interest has been due to the *Outback Opal Hunters* TV program, with filming for season 9 completed in 2026 in the Coober Pedy and Andamooka Opal Fields.

Active claims as of 30 June 2026:

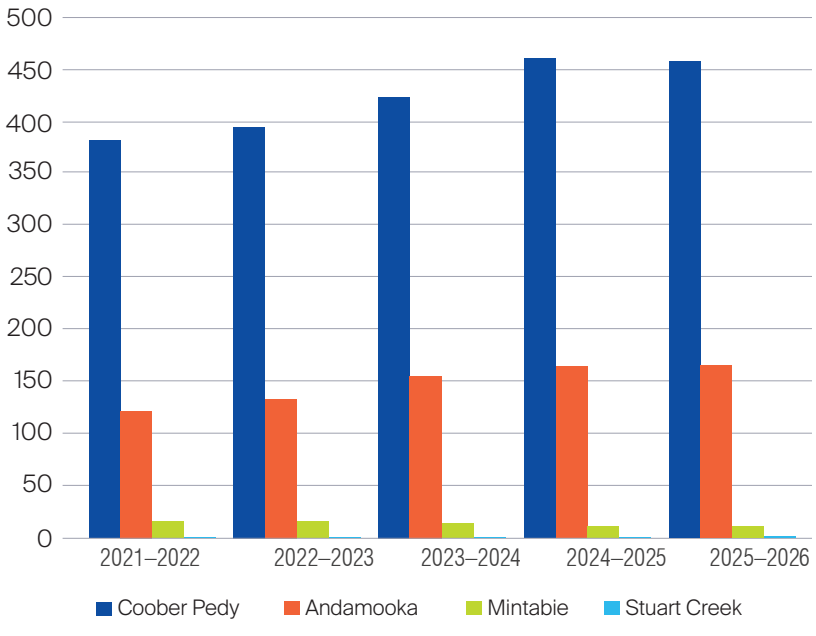
Andamooka – 166

Coober Pedy – 456

Mintabie – 11

Stuart Creek – 1

Opal program active claims for FY 2021–22 to 2025–26



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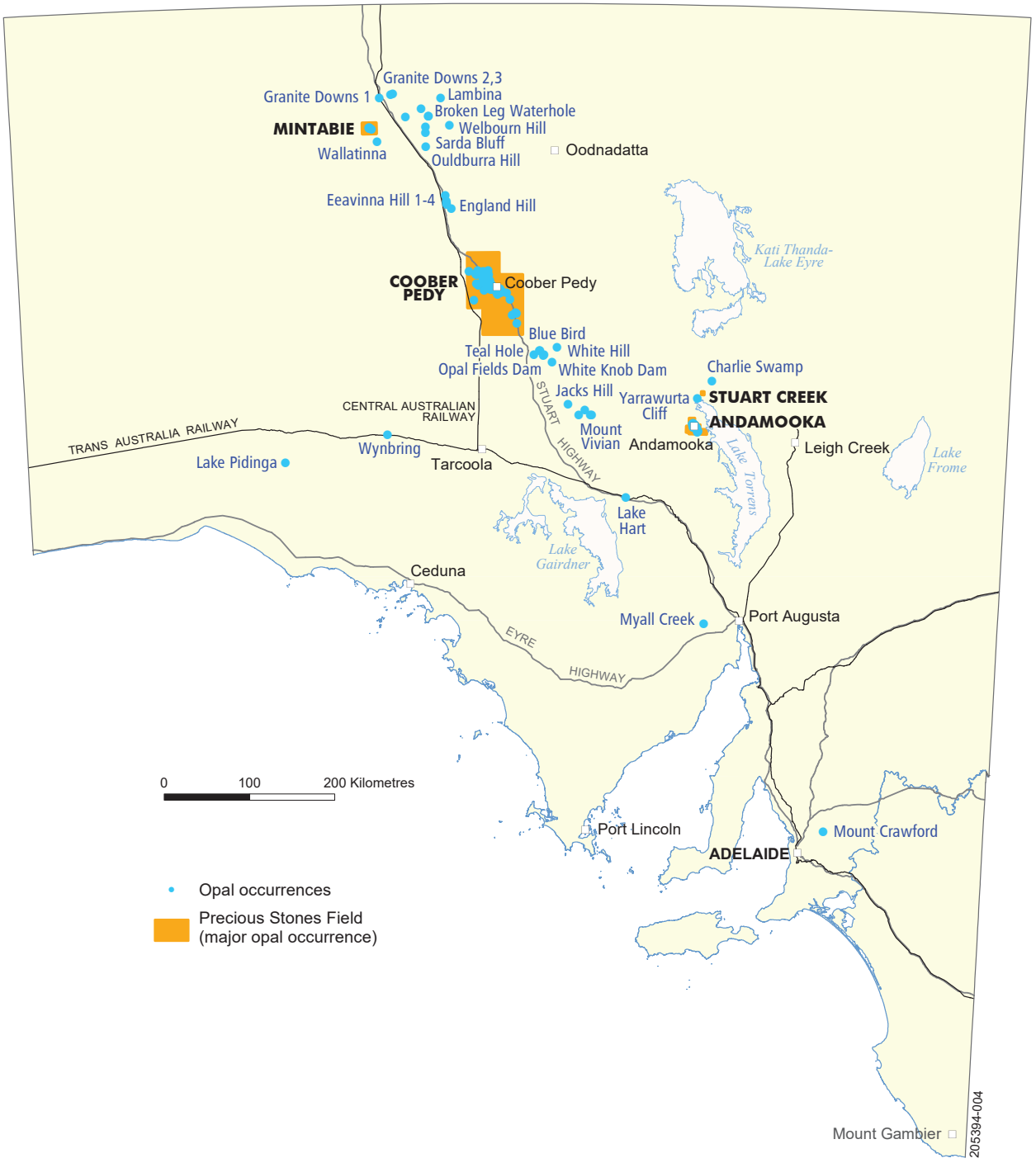
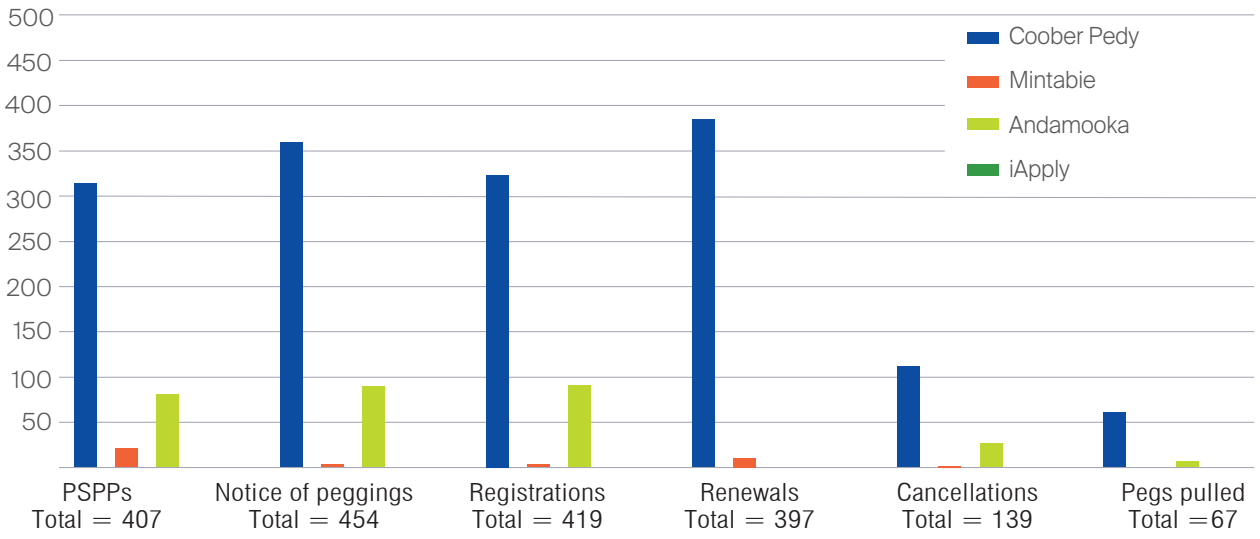
OPAL OCCURRENCES IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA



OPAL FIELD ADMINISTRATIVE TASKS FY 2025–26

DEM's opal mining program manages several key administrative activities. Over the reporting period, 407 precious stones prospecting permits (PSPPs) were issued, supporting new exploration efforts. There were 454 notices lodged for pegging opal mining claims, and 419 opal mining claims registered. Renewals remain a significant part of the process, with 397 precious stones claims extended. At the same time, 139 claims were cancelled, and 67 precious stones claims pegs pulled due to expiry of registered claims, illegal pegging or Court Order.

Opal field administrative tasks FY 2025–26



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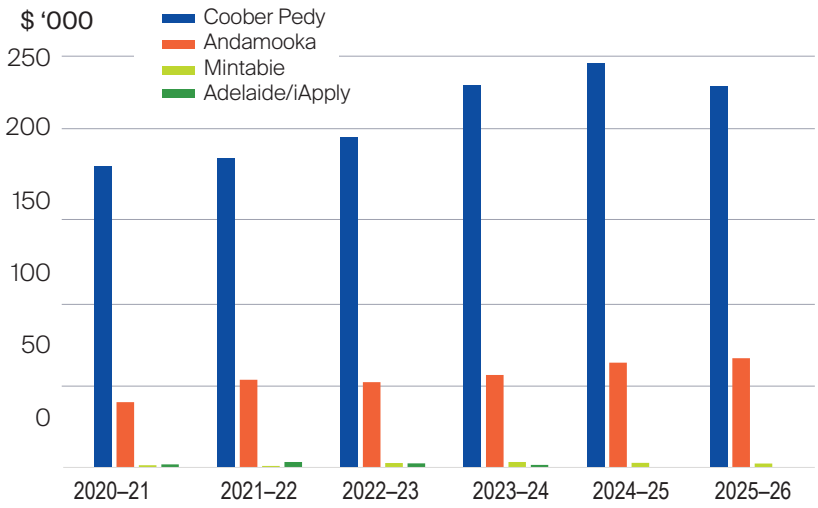
OPAL MINING REVENUE RAISED FY 2025–26

Coober Pedy	$229,782.50
Andamooka	$65,777.10
Mintabie	$2,061
iApply - Aust Post	$0
TOTAL REVENUE	**$297,620.60**

Opal program revenue from 2020–21 to 2025–26



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OPAL MINING COMPLIANCE

DEM conducts compliance activities to provide assurance to the government, opal miners and community stakeholders that opal mining activities are complying with the appropriate Acts and regulations. Non-compliance identified through surveillance, complaints, incidents and alleged breaches was assessed through 1050 claim inspections (first and second inspections).

If a claim is found to be non-compliant on its first inspection the claim holder will receive a letter from the department to rectify the breach. A second inspection will follow a minimum of 14 days from the date of the letter.

On completion of a second inspection if the claim fails to comply with the instructions given in the rectification letter, the claim is plainted in the Warden's Court for forfeiture.

YTD (2024–2025)	Coober Pedy	Mintabie	Andamooka	Total
Total inspections	841	5	355	1,201
Compliant	758	5	287	1,050
Non-compliant	83	0	68	151

COURT ACTIONS

Escalated matters of non-compliance under the *Opal Mining Act 1995* are managed by the Opal Mining Registrar, who initiates Warden's Court actions.

This includes regular phone conferences and by sittings of the Warden's Court in Coober Pedy and Andamooka twice a year. Opal miners can also initiate their own actions in the Warden's Court. These matters usually relate to suspension of working conditions, amalgamation of tenements or partnership disputes.

Court appearances
FY 2025–26: **3**

FORMER MINES

DEM has a comprehensive program that manages all former mine sites and addresses issues of environmental and public safety. The program was established to document and assess the risk of former mines in South Australia through the undertaking of desktop analysis, on-site hazard identification and site inspections. During FY 2025-26, 144 assessments were undertaken.

The Minerals Regulation branch actively manages the following key sites:

- Brukunga Mine
- Leigh Creek Coalfield
- Port Pirie Treatment Plant
- Radium Hill Mine

Further information on former mines can be found on the DEM website.

DEM ROYALTY COMPLIANCE

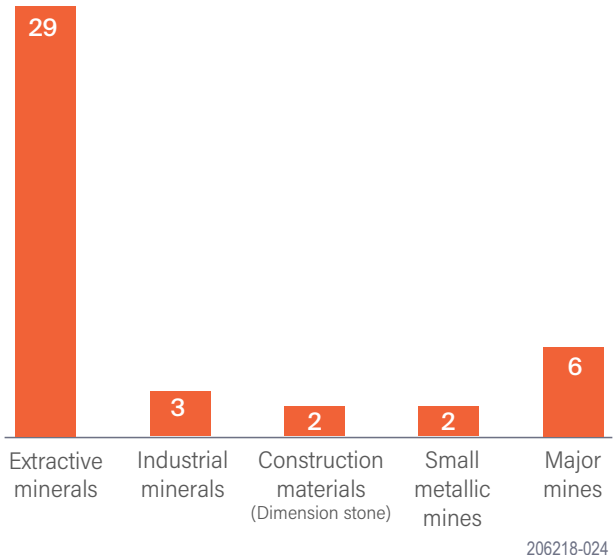
DEM administers policy, collection and reporting of all royalties sourced from South Australian producers for both mineral and energy resources.

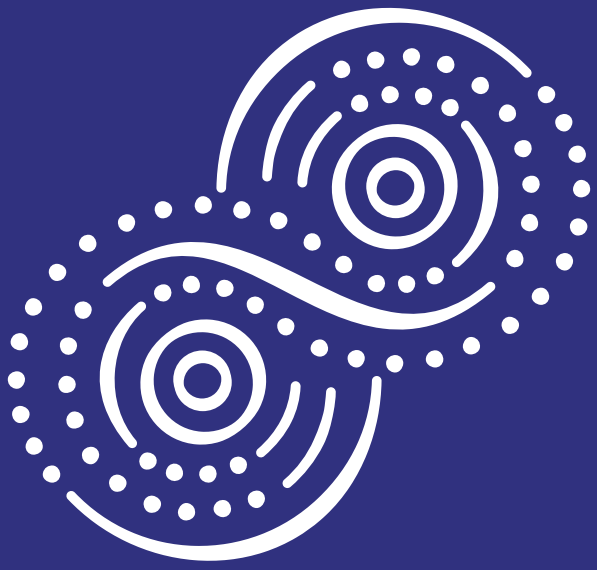
The reported mineral production royalties for FY 2025–26 was $454 million, up from last year's $306 million.

In 2025–26 DEM conducted 42 mineral royalty audits across four categories:

- Major mines
- Small Metallic Mines
- Construction materials (Dimension stone)
- Industrial minerals
- Extractive minerals.

Mineral royalty audits conducted by mineral sectors FY 2025–26





ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Department for Energy and Mining acknowledges Aboriginal people as the First Nations Peoples of South Australia. We recognise and respect the cultural connections as the traditional owners and occupants of the land and waters of South Australia, and that they continue to make a unique and irreplaceable contribution to the state.

DISCLAIMER

The contents of this report are for general information only and are not intended as professional advice, and the Department for Energy and Mining (and the Government of South Australia) make no representation, express or implied, as to the accuracy, reliability or completeness of the information contained in this report or as to the suitability of the information for any particular purpose. Use of or reliance upon the information contained in this report is at the sole risk of the user in all things and the Department for Energy and Mining (and the Government of South Australia) disclaim any responsibility for that use or reliance and any liability to the user.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Government of South Australia
Department for Energy and Mining

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