

Exploration Reporting Guideline

What is the Exploration Reporting Guideline?

The Exploration Reporting Guideline titled *Exploration reporting: a guide for reporting on exploration and prospecting in NSW* sets out the structure, content and data format requirements for annual, partial relinquishment and final geoscientific reports submitted for authorities under the *Mining Act 1992*. The Exploration Reporting Guideline ensures that authority holders provide high quality reports on exploration activities completed in NSW, ensuring there is future access to high quality geoscientific reports and data.

Why was the Exploration Reporting Guideline updated?

It was updated to amend outdated legislative references and reporting templates. The update also aligns the Exploration Reporting Guideline with the new Annual Report Release policy.

What are the main changes?

Changes

improved format using summary tables with hyperlinks to more detailed information

updates to outdated legislative references and reporting templates

updates to reflect changes to departmental name and structure, contact details and webpages

details the new two section (Part A and Part B) annual exploration reporting requirements that allows for separate reporting of geoscientific information and commercially sensitive information in line with the Annual Report Release policy

details what is considered to be commercially sensitive information to remain confidential for the life of the authority

confirmation that GDA2020 is the preferred datum

submission of reports via Title Management System (TMS)

expenditure and activity information to be captured directly through Title Management System (TMS)

details of reporting for opal prospecting licences has been removed and will be moved to a separate document

New requirements

the provision of a scaled map of the authority area (including the area to be relinquished in the case of partial relinquishment reports)

details of the provision of XRF data in XRF templates

the submission of laboratory data sheets where geochemical data is being submitted

Exploration reporting guideline and Annual Report Release



Frequently Asked Questions

the submission of geotechnical and gas data where this has been collected during coal exploration

the submission of tabular data for coal (e.g. lithology, analyses, gas, geotechnical data) in flat text files

Removed requirements

technical manager signature on reports (except where specified in individual authority conditions)

separate activity and expenditure reporting for each authority under a group report

How do these updates align with the release of annual exploration reports and data under Clause 64 of the *Mining Regulation 2016*?

The new Exploration Reporting Guideline sets out the requirements to submit the annual exploration reports and associated data in two parts.

- Part A includes data and information that will be publicly released 5 years after submission
- Part B includes commercially sensitive information that will remain confidential for the life of the authority.

This will reduce administration for authority holders by eliminating the need to redact future reports and data released under Clause 64 of the *Mining Regulation 2016*.

Will there be any changes to the assessment of geoscientific reports?

No, the proposed changes to the Exploration Reporting Guideline do not change the way reports are assessed.

My licence condition does not require exploration/activity reporting, do I need to submit annual / partial relinquishment / final reports?

If there is an inconsistency between a condition of an authorisation and a reporting requirement imposed under the *Mining Act 1992*, the condition prevails to the extent of the inconsistency (s.163C(4)).

I have an ancillary mining licence / mining purposes lease. Do I need to submit annual / partial relinquishment / final reports?

No – an exemption from the reporting requirements under section 163C of the *Mining Act 1992* for ancillary mining activity(s) was given on 18 November 2021.

Can I still submit a report in EROL?

Reports may be submitted via EROL until 31 December 2021. The new Department of Regional NSW webpage does not contain a link to EROL, but the system can be accessed via <https://erol.minerals.nsw.gov.au/digserol/>. After 31 December 2021, all reports must be submitted via the Titles Management System (TMS).

How do I access LaFix to upload large data files?

<https://www.regional.nsw.gov.au/meg/geoscience/products-and-data/company-exploration-reports/online-services/lafix>

Is the *Exploration Guideline: Annual activity reporting for prospecting titles* being updated?

The current *Exploration Guideline: Annual activity reporting for prospecting titles* (version 3.0 published December 2020) requires submission of:

1. Annual exploration report (including, if applicable, geoscientific data)
2. Annual environment management and rehabilitation compliance report
3. Annual community consultation report
4. Annual activity summary and expenditure table.

An update of the Annual Activity Reporting Guideline is in progress and will reflect the changes.

The annual environmental and rehabilitation compliance report must now be lodged via the NSW Resources Regulator Portal <https://nswresourcesregulator.service-now.com/regulator>

The annual community consultation report must still be lodged with the appropriate annual exploration report, via TMS.

Submission of activity and expenditure data will no longer be in a spreadsheet, but directly captured in TMS. Submission of these data via TMS satisfies licence conditions related to reporting annual activity and expenditure on authorities.

Do I still need to resubmit a work program annually?

Annual resubmission of the work program as part of annual activity reports is no longer required as of 1 January 2021. Work programs are now only required to be submitted with an application for a new authority, at renewal of an authority, or where a significant variation is proposed to the work program in accordance with Part E of the [Exploration Guideline: Work Programs for Prospecting Titles](#).

How do I submit an Environmental and Rehabilitation Compliance Report?

The Environmental and Rehabilitation Compliance Report must be lodged via the NSW Resources Regulator Portal at <https://nswresourcesregulator.service-now.com/regulator>

How do I report on an opal prospecting licence?

Guidance and templates are available at <https://www.regional.nsw.gov.au/meg/nsw-resources/opals/opal-prospecting-in-nsw>

Why do I now need to submit laboratory data sheets and core photos (mineral titles)?

The submission of exploration data such as core photos and laboratory data sheets allows for the validation of data submitted and provides a full record of all exploration undertaken.

What if I do not use CoalLog (coal titles)?

CoalLog has been a requirement for reporting of coal exploration (drillhole) data since the 2016. If CoalLog is not the companies data format, it is possible to configure data exports into CoalLog format for exploration reporting purposes.

Will there be Title Management System (TMS) report submission training?

A TMS report submission guide and training video will be available on the Department of Regional NSW web page soon.

Exploration reporting guideline and Annual Report Release



Frequently Asked Questions

What are some of the most frequent mistakes made in exploration reporting, leading to reports being returned to the authority holder?

Frequently made mistakes for annual reporting include:

- The submission is missing one or more components required under the licence condition (non-IMER titles) or the *Exploration Guideline: Annual activity reporting for prospecting titles* (IMER titles) e.g. Community Consultation Report.
- The report is not in the prescribed format (eg missing components, illegible figures, does not address key information required).
- Data:
 - Data files or other data / reports are missing e.g. a petrology report mentioned in the text may have not been attached.
 - Data supplied doesn't match sampling / drilling metrics as mentioned in the report body.
 - Failing to provide data in the current templates and with an accompanying dictionary for lithology.
 - Mixing of assay data from different laboratories or where multiple assay methods have been used often leads to corrupt data.
 - Not using correct formats for geophysical data and/or not providing an acquisition report.

Why are mining studies, financial modelling, product optimisation etc now classified as Exploration?

The Exploration Reporting Guideline includes both exploration and assessment/mining licence reporting requirements. Summaries of mining studies, financial modelling, product optimisation etc are only required for assessment leases and mining licences. This requirement was also in the previous (2016) version of the Exploration Reporting Guideline.

Under clauses 59 to 61 of the *Mining Regulation 2016*, which set out the requirements of annual, partial relinquishment and final reports, reports must summaries all 'surveys and other operations' – i.e. reporting is not strictly limited to on ground exploration.

How will the Department guarantee confidentiality of Part B?

The Department has governance arrangements in place to manage confidential information. Currently all exploration reports, including confidential are stored within the DIGS system, and this will continue.

Who has access to Part B, and will the Department sign a confidentiality agreement?

Access to Part B of Annual Reports is afforded to Mining Exploration and Geoscience (MEG) staff who receive and assess geological reports and data, MEG staff (including the Resources Regulator) who use the information contained within the reports, and Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) staff with a regulatory reason to access any reports.

MEG will not sign any specific confidentiality agreement as the confidentiality of reports is legislated in the *Mining Regulation 2016*. Staff in government sign a confidentiality agreement on commencement of employment.

Exploration reporting guideline and Annual Report Release



Frequently Asked Questions

Are the categories listed in the Activity and Expenditure table (Appendix 3 of the Exploration Reporting Guideline) the only ones available?

Yes, the categories listed in Appendix 3 (Table 10) of the Exploration Reporting Guideline are the only categories available and are also the only categories represented in TMS.

Further instruction for compiling activity and expenditure information has been included in the Exploration Reporting Guideline and TMS.

It is noted that the new activity and expenditure categories vary slightly from the previous requirements and in particular the removal of the 'geochemistry' categories. It is intended in the revised guideline that the expenditure associated with geochemistry is included within the expenditure for acquisition of that sample (for example, drill core analysis costs are to be included within the 'drilling' costs). Expenditure for acquisition exploration categories is now inclusive of all costs incurred in obtaining, preparing, analysing and interpreting samples and data.

Is there an Expenditure and Activity table available to assist with compiling this data prior to entry into TMS?

Appendix 3 (Table 10) of the Exploration Reporting Guideline provides a template for capturing activity and expenditure data prior to entry of this data into TMS.

Do you need to submit Part B even though there may not be any commercially sensitive information?

Yes. Both Part A and Part B are compulsory components of annual reports as of 1st January 2022 and must be submitted.

Do the new guidelines apply to non-IMER leases?

Yes, the new Exploration Reporting Guideline applies to all authorities granted under the *Mining Act 1992* where that authority has a reporting licence condition.

How long in advance can a report be initiated in TMS as a draft?

TMS drafts do not expire, therefore a report may be initiated and prepared in advance of the reporting due date and returned to as many times as required before the submission is complete. However, the report must be submitted by the reporting due date of the authority.

Why then do we have to describe the recommendations for further work in Part A, when Part B requires a description of proposed exploration activities for the next 12 month reporting period.

Part A includes a summary of recommendations for further work, it may be general in nature and not nominate specific activities or expenditure.

Part B is intended for more specific activities and expenditure proposed to demonstrate progression through exploration stages as per the nominated work program for that authority.

When submitting an annual report in Titles Management System (TMS), what is the difference between the selectable categories Annual Exploration (Geoscientific) Report and the Annual Exploration (Geoscientific) Report Part A/B?

Annual Exploration (Geoscientific) Report: Annual exploration (geoscientific) report compiled using the previous guideline 'Exploration reporting: A guide for reporting on exploration and prospecting in New South Wales' (V2.0 published Mar 2016).

Exploration reporting guideline and Annual Report Release



Frequently Asked Questions

This is a transitional option and will only be available until 31 December 2021, after which point all annual reports are required in Part A/Part B as per the new Exploration Reporting Guideline (V3.0 published in October 2021).

Annual Exploration (Geoscientific) Report Part A/B: Annual exploration (Geoscientific) report in PART A and PART B – compiled using the new guideline 'Exploration reporting: A guide for reporting on exploration and prospecting in New South Wales' (V3.0 published October 2021)

When submitting an annual report in Titles Management System (TMS), what is the difference between the selectable categories Annual Activity Report and the Exploration Performance Report?

Annual Activity Report: To be selected for exploration licences and assessment leases granted or renewed after 1 July 2015 and where the licence condition states 'Unless otherwise approved by the Secretary, the licence holder must submit annual activity reports prepared in accordance with the *Exploration guidelines: Annual Activity Reporting for Prospecting Titles*'.

Exploration Performance Report: To be selected for all licences (EL, AL, ML) that were granted or last renewed prior to 1 July 2015 or do not have the licence condition stating 'Unless otherwise approved by the Secretary, the licence holder must submit annual activity reports prepared in accordance with the *Exploration guidelines: Annual Activity Reporting for Prospecting Titles*' – i.e. this option is to be selected for non-IMER licences.

What is the difference between 'conclusions and recommendations' and 'interpretation and discussion' in the Exploration Reporting Guideline?

1. Conclusions from all reportable exploration activities and recommendations for future work are a summary and do not include detail of activities.
2. Interpretation and discussion details interpretations made and targets/prospects/areas of interest identified based on exploration conducted, and their significance. This section should also include details of the key attributes that may affect progression of the exploration target, or for more advanced projects, the ability to mine or market the resource where relevant.

Annual Report Release

What is the timeframe for the release of Group 9 reports?

Group 9 (Coal) reports will be included in approximately 3 years and will be subject to a future industry consultation.

How are EL reports intended to be treated where a greater tenure is granted over the EL or there is part transfer (new title created), having the effect of cancelling all/part of the EL? Will the old EL report be published after 5 years or will it remain confidential for duration of subsequent AL and the ML?

The confidentiality of reports will be consistent with any flow-on provisions commencing. Where an EL has a flow-on ML/AL authority, the confidentiality of reports submitted under the EL will be consistent with that of the flow-on ML/AL.

In the case of a part transfer, only that part transferred would retain the confidentiality of the flow-on authority. The part which is has not been transferred would become open file if it has been relinquished or after a 5 year confidentiality period has lapsed.

Exploration reporting guideline and Annual Report Release



Frequently Asked Questions

How do we check contact details in TAS?

To check or update contact details in Titles Administration System (TAS) contact resource.operations@planning.nsw.gov.au

Is drillhole data considered redactable? Should drillhole data be supplied in Part B of annual reports under the new Exploration Reporting Guideline or does it have to be supplied with Part A?

Drillhole data must be supplied in Part A of an Annual Report under the new Exploration Reporting Guideline and is not redactable. Appendix 2 (Table 9) of the Exploration Reporting Guideline and Appendix 2 of the Annual Report Redaction Guide lists types of exploration data and categorises those data types as observed/raw or interpreted and sets out the associated confidentiality period for each. These confidentiality periods were developed in consultation with industry representatives.

If a flow-on MLA is still under assessment, can the current EL reports identified in the release listing be kept confidential until the application is determined?

For the purpose of the Annual Report Release Policy MEG will allow exploration licences, which have had an application for a MLA submitted, to be kept confidential until such a time that the Mining Lease (ML) is determined.

Who can request annual reports via the redaction email?

Title holders, and agents who are authorised to act for the authority holder. The report will only be supplied to the email address that is specified as the authorised person in the Titles Administration System (TAS). Contact resource.operations@planning.nsw.gov.au for any changes to TAS.

Will authorities that have approved group reporting require redaction?

Authorities with approved group reporting are generally associated with mining or assessment leases which have not been included in the initial stage of the Annual Report Release Policy. There are a limited number of ELs that still are covered by historic group reporting approvals and this group reporting is removed upon the renewal those ELs still covered by group reporting. Any group reporting for ELs would not require any additional redaction as all reporting under that group would be released after the 5-year confidentiality period has lapsed since that group report was submitted i.e. the report for all authorities in the group will be eligible for release at the same time.

What is the confidentiality position for annual community consultation reports, and environmental management and rehabilitation reports, work programs, and activity/expenditure data?

Only Annual Exploration Reports will be released under the Annual Report Release Policy.

Annual Community Consultation Reports and Environmental Management and Rehabilitation Reports are not governed by clause 59 and 64 of the *Mining Regulation 2016*.

Work programs are no longer required to be submitted annually. Those that have been submitted under previous exploration reporting guidelines will not be released until the end of the life of the authority.

Where activity and expenditure data are submitted with an annual report under the new Exploration Reporting Guideline through TMS, these data will not be released after a 5-year confidentiality period has lapsed and will remain confidential for the term of the title.

Are all annual reports subject to public release?

All annual reports for authorities may be released after five years have passed since lodgement, unless the authority contains a confidentiality condition (section 365 of the *Mining Act 1992*, clause 64 of the *Mining Regulation 2016*). However, MEG is adopting a staged approach to public release.

Initially, the release is limited to **exploration licences** and **assessment leases** for **mineral groups 1–6, and 10**.

- Group 1 – metallic minerals
- Group 2 – non-metallic minerals
- Group 3 – semi-precious stones
- Group 4 – marine aggregate
- Group 5 – clay minerals
- Group 6 – corundum, diamond, ruby and sapphire
- Group 10 – mineral sands

Annual reports for other authorities (including coal (Group 9) and mining leases) are anticipated to be released in the future, subject to further industry consultation. Where historical exploration titles have 'flow on' mining leases, reports submitted under the exploration titles will also be deferred at this time.

How long do I have to inform MEG that I want to redact information from my annual report?

Authority holders have 6 months, from the time the list of reports is published, to inform MEG that they want to redact information from an annual report. MEG will publish the eligible report lists:

- for the initial release (annual reports lodged before 1 June 2016): **31 March 2022**
- subsequent releases: **1 August each year**.

This information will be available on the MEG webpage.

How do I inform MEG that I want to redact a report?

You can find details of how to inform MEG that you want to redact on the MEG webpage.

https://www.regional.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/1356114/Annual-Report-Release-Policy-How-To-Guide.pdf

Where do I submit redacted reports?

You can find details of where to submit redacted reports on the MEG webpage.

https://www.regional.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/1356114/Annual-Report-Release-Policy-How-To-Guide.pdf

What format do need to submit the redacted reports in?

Your redacted report will simply be a copy of your original report with the redaction applied. You can request an example of how to apply redaction to a PDF from

redaction@geoscience.nsw.gov.au.

Exploration reporting guideline and Annual Report Release



Frequently Asked Questions

If your report had attached data, which was not provided in tabular format, you should also provide this data set in the current data templates found on the MEG webpage.

What if I decide not to redact?

If you decide not to redact, then you do not need to do anything. The original submitted report with associated data will be made publicly available 6 months after the list of eligible reports are published.

What if I have submitted a redaction but MEG does not agree with the redaction?

There is an option to request a review of MEG's decision. This review will be performed by the Redaction Review Group. The decision of the group will be final.

What will occur if I have not supplied my redacted report within 12 months of publication of the reports list?

If no redacted report has been provided to MEG within 12 months of the publication of the report list, the annual report (as is, without redaction) will be released. Where a proposed redaction request is rejected and a revised redacted report is not submitted in the required timeframe, the original report will be released.

What will occur if I have not notified MEG that I want to redact information from a report within 6 months of publication of the reports list?

Where no notification of intention to redact is received by MEG within six months of the publication of the reports list, the original report will be released as is and without redaction.

Glossary

Table 1 Glossary of abbreviations and key terms

Abbreviation	Description
AL	Assessment Lease
Annual Report	Annual Exploration Report submitted under clause 59 of the Mining Regulations 2016 and the Annual Activity Reporting Guidelines
DIGS	Digital Imaging Geological System – A publicly accessible online collection of reports, publications and data https://search.geoscience.nsw.gov.au/
EL	Exploration Licence
EROL	Exploration and Environmental Online Lodgement – Former portal for lodging reports online. Use of this system will be discontinued as of 31 st December 2021.

Exploration reporting guideline and Annual Report Release



Frequently Asked Questions

Abbreviation	Description
IMER	Improved Management of Exploration Regulation The reforms set out in the IMER commenced on 1 July 2015 and apply to all exploration and assessment leases granted, renewed or transferred after 1 July 2015. IMER licences have a standard licence condition stating 'Unless otherwise approved by the Secretary, the licence holder must submit annual activity reports prepared in accordance with the <i>Exploration guidelines: Annual Activity Reporting for Prospecting Titles</i> '.
LaFix	Large File Exchange Service https://www.regional.nsw.gov.au/meg/geoscience/products-and-data/company-exploration-reports/online-services/lafix
MEG	Mining, Exploration and Geoscience Department of Regional NSW
ML	Mining Lease
TMS	Titles Management System https://www.regional.nsw.gov.au/meg/exploring-and-mining/titles-management-system
TAS	Titles Administration System

© State of New South Wales through Regional NSW 2021. You may copy, distribute, display, download and otherwise freely deal with this publication for any purpose, provided that you attribute the Regional NSW as the owner. However, you must obtain permission if you wish to charge others for access to the publication (other than at cost); include the publication in advertising or a product for sale; modify the publication; or republish the publication on a website. You may freely link to the publication on a departmental website.