

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – 15<sup>th</sup> October 2024**

## **Proposed recommendations from The NSW Opal Mining Inquiry threatens to end Opal Mining in Lightning Ridge**

**Lightning Ridge, NSW** – The iconic opal mining industry in Lightning Ridge, which has produced the world's finest opals for over 120 years, is under serious threat due to recommendations from the recent NSW Small Scale Titles (Opal Mining) inquiry. These proposed changes could signal the demise of an industry that has not only made Lightning Ridge famous but also provided livelihoods for hundreds of locals, and thousands of tourists.

Key recommendations from the inquiry include restrictions that would prevent new miners from staking claims over old underground workings unless they convert the claim into open-cut operations - an option that could lead to extensive environmental damage and render large areas of land unusable for future mining.

Currently, there are 3,166 small mineral claims in and around Lightning Ridge. Every one of these will need to be resurveyed and realigned with a new grid system, further increasing the cost burden on miners.

One of the most alarming recommendations is the transfer of responsibility for rehabilitating old mines to the current leaseholders. This would shift the financial burden of past governmental failures in mine inspection and remediation directly onto miners. Additionally, the number of claims a miner, their family, and associated businesses can hold would be capped at two, severely limiting the potential for future growth.

The inquiry also suggests a sixfold increase in the cost of staking a claim, along with a rise in the environmental levy. For many miners, these costs are simply unaffordable. Such changes could drive them out of NSW to states where mining remains financially viable.

Local miners are calling on Minister Houssos to reconsider these recommendations and meet with the mining community in person to understand the devastating impact these changes could have on their industry and livelihoods.

"These draconian recommendations will destroy an industry that has been the lifeblood of this town for generations," a local spokesperson said. "We urge the Minister to listen to those directly affected before it's too late."

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