

March 2024

Frequently asked questions

Annual report release, redaction, and exploration reporting

Summary of key changes and frequently asked questions about the Annual report release policy, Annual report Redaction guide and Exploration reporting guideline.

Annual report release policy and Redaction guide

What is the Annual report release policy?

All annual reports for authorities may be released after five years have passed since lodgement (section 365 of the *Mining Act 1992*, clause 64 of the *Mining Regulation 2016*). This is also known as the 'Sunset Clause'.

The Annual report release policy manages the process for the public release of annual reports with associated data lodged five or more years prior to 1 June 2021 for exploration licences and assessment leases.

What is the Redaction guide?

The Annual report redaction guide (Redaction guide) provides guidance for redaction of personal, commercially sensitive, or proprietary information from reports that are eligible for release under the Annual report release policy.

What are the key changes between the Annual report release policy and Redaction guide (V1.0 published October 2021) and the revised Annual report release policy and Redaction guide?

- Table 1 outlines the reports eligible for release and not eligible for release under the revised Annual report release policy.
- Table 2 outlines the key changes to the types of reports released under the Annual report release policy.
- Table 3 outlines the key changes to the Annual report release policy.
- Table 4 outlines the key changes to the Annual report Redaction guide.

The previous guideline Annual report release redaction information ('How to guide') will not be republished. The information contained in this former guide has been incorporated into the revised Annual report Redaction guide.

Table 1 Summary of reports for release and not for release

Release		Not for release
✓	Group 1-6 and Group 10 exploration licence and assessment lease reports and associated data	× Mining Lease reports and associated data (all mineral groups)
✓	Group 8 (geothermal) exploration licence and assessment lease reports and associated data	× Group 7 small scale titles (opal prospecting licences and mineral claims) within an opal prospecting area reports and associated data
✓	Group 9 (coal) and Group 9A (oil shale) baseline geological data from exploration licence and assessment lease reports	× Group 9 (coal) and Group 9A (oil shale) exploration licence and assessment lease reports and coal quality analytical data
✓	Group 11 (uranium) exploration licence and assessment lease reports and associated data	× There are limited circumstances where reports from exploration licences and assessment leases associated with mining leases will not be released, or extended confidentiality provisions will apply upon relinquishment, to be consistent with not releasing mining lease reports. Refer to the Annual report release policy for further detail.
✓	Group 12 (hydrogen and nonmetals) exploration licences and assessment leases	
Note: Community Consultation Reports and Environmental Management and Rehabilitation Reports are not governed by clause 59 and 64 of the Mining Regulation 2016 and are therefore will not be released under this Annual report release policy.		

Table 2 Comparison of report eligibility for release under Annual report release policy versions V1.0 (2021) and V2.0 (2024)

Mineral group	Version 1.0 (published October 2021)	Version 2.0 (to be published February 2024)	
	Annual reports submitted on or prior to 31 December 2021	Annual reports submitted on or prior to 31 December 2021	Annual reports submitted on or after 1 January 2022
Group 1-6 and Group 10	Exploration Licences and Assessment Leases (Excluding authorities with ‘flow-on’ mining leases) 5 years after lodgement of the report: Release annual report (original report or redacted report where submitted), and data that is eligible to be released.	Exploration licences and assessment leases 5 years after lodgement of the report: • release annual report (original report or redacted report where submitted) • release associated geoscientific data that is eligible to be released.	Exploration licences and assessment leases 5 years after lodgement of the report: • release Part A of annual report • release associated geoscientific data that is eligible to be released.
Group 7	Not included for release in V1.0	Annual reports from opal prospecting licences and mineral claims within opal prospecting areas are not available for release. Exploration licences and assessment leases that include Group 7 but are not located in an opal prospecting area 5 years after lodgement of the report: • release annual report (original report or redacted report where submitted) • release associated geoscientific data that is eligible to be released.	Annual reports from opal prospecting licences and mineral claims within opal prospecting areas are not available for release. Exploration licences and assessment leases that include Group 7 but are not located in an opal prospecting area 5 years after lodgement of the report: • release annual report (original report or redacted report where submitted) • release associated geoscientific data that is eligible to be released.
Group 8	Not included for release in V1.0	Exploration licences and assessment leases 5 years after lodgement of the report: • release annual report (original report or redacted report where submitted)	Exploration licences and assessment leases 5 years after lodgement of the report: • release Part A of annual report

Mineral group	Version 1.0 (published October 2021)	Version 2.0 (to be published February 2024)	
	Annual reports submitted on or prior to 31 December 2021	Annual reports submitted on or prior to 31 December 2021	Annual reports submitted on or after 1 January 2022
		• release associated geoscientific data that is eligible to be released.	• release associated geoscientific data that is eligible to be released.
Group 9 (Includes 9A)	Not included for release in V1.0	Exploration licences and assessment leases 5 years after lodgement of the report: • release baseline geological data that is eligible to be released.	Exploration licences and assessment leases 5 years after lodgement of the report: • release baseline geological data that is eligible to be released.
Group 11 and 12	Not included for release in V1.0	Not applicable – No reports available	Exploration licences and assessment leases 5 years after lodgement of the report: • release part A of annual report • release data that is eligible to be released.

Table 3 Summary of key changes to Annual report release policy

Section heading	Changes
Document	Administrative updates – updated format, website links and contact details
Background	Updated for currency. Inclusion of objective.
Purpose	Updated for currency. Removed reference to exploration licences and assessment leases, and licence conditions providing for the confidentiality of annual reports
Benefits	Minor update to text
Release stages and timing	Updated for currency. Inclusion of second release timing (2024). Addition of Figure 1. Removed reference to future consultation on mining leases, group 9 reports, and ‘flow-on’ authorities.
Second stage release (2024)	New section – Describes the reports included and not included for release in the second stage release
Relinquished authorities	New section - Describes the limited circumstances in which extended confidentiality provisions and exemptions from reporting will be approved, to aid in the protection of commercially sensitive and proprietary information related to relinquished authorities.
Report release and reaction process (Groups 1-6,8,10-12)	Updated for currency. Inclusion of timing for second stage release (2024). Inclusion of option to seek an independent review where a redaction is rejected by Mining, Exploration and Geoscience (MEG).
Baseline geological data release process (Group 9 and 9A)	New section – Describes the process and timing of release for baseline geological data for Group 9 and Group 9A authorities.
Schedule 1	The information formerly contained in Schedule 1 has been moved to Table 5 within the section ‘Report release and reaction process (Groups 1-6,8,10-12)’.
Glossary	Inclusion of new definitions, including ‘Baseline geological data’ for Group 9 and Group 9A

Table 4 Summary of key changes to Annual report Redaction guide

Section	Changes
Document	Administrative updates – updated format, website links and contact details
Authority Holder - Steps to Redaction	Updated Figure 1 ‘Decision Tree’. Updated for currency.
Frequently asked questions	Removed from Annual report Redaction guide. Now included in the Frequently Asked Questions document.
Appendix 1	Details included under the subheading ‘Digital data submitted before the introduction of exploration reporting templates’ has been relocated into the Annual report release policy document for clarity. The former requirement to resubmit data in a digital format has been removed.
Appendix 2	Clarification provided that data may be disclosed once 5 years have passed since the lodgement of the report or once the authority to which the report relates ceases to be in force. Drilling data category: • Sample details – Now excludes Group 9 and Group 9A • Sample geochemistry - Now excludes Group 9 and Group 9A • Coal quality analytical data – New category included for Group 9 and Group 9A (confidential for life of authority)
Glossary	Inclusion of new definitions, including ‘Baseline geological data’ for Group 9 and Group 9A

Why is the Annual report release policy being updated?

The Annual report release policy was first published in October 2021. The Policy committed to the release of further reports in the future, following further consultation. The report types initially excluded from the Annual report release policy included coal (Group 9), mining lease, and ‘flow-on’ authorities. Other mineral groups (Group 7, 8, 11 and 12) were also excluded from the policy.

The Annual report release policy has now been updated to include these additional report types that were initially excluded from release, except for mining leases.

Are all annual reports subject to public release under the Annual report release policy?

All annual reports for authorities may be released after five years have passed since lodgement (section 365 of the *Mining Act 1992*, clause 64 of the Mining Regulation 2016).

MEG has adopted a staged approach to public release.

Initially (Stage 1), the Annual report release policy in 2021 was applied only 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 remaining authority types will be released from 2024 (Stage 2), subject to limited exceptions:

- Annual reports for mining leases will not be released under the Annual report release policy.
- Annual reports for mineral groups 1-6 and 10 exploration licences and assessment leases that were formerly associated with a mining lease with the 'flow-on' confidentiality condition will now be released under the second stage release of the Annual report release policy. The reference to 'flow-on' authority has now been removed from all remaining mining lease conditions, as such these reports are now subject to clause 64 of the Mining Regulation 2016.
- Annual reports for Group 7 small scale titles (opal prospecting licences and mineral claims) will not be released under the Annual report release policy. Annual reports for exploration licences and assessment leases that include Group 7 minerals, not within an opal prospecting area will be released.
- Annual reports for Group 9 and Group 9A will not be released however, baseline geological data (see glossary) submitted with Group 9 and Group 9A reports will be released.
- Annual reports for Group 8, Group 11 and Group 12 are included for release of any future reports submitted.
- Annual reports for mineral group 1-6, 8, 9, 9A, 10, 11 and 12 exploration licences and assessment leases that were historically group reported under an approved reporting group with a mining lease, where that mining lease remains in force, will not be released. This is to be consistent with not releasing mining lease reports. 5 years after lodgement of the report, data that is eligible to be released after 5 years (refer to Redaction guide Appendix 2) and baseline geological data (refer to redaction guide glossary) may be released from areas not covered by a current mining lease.
- Annual reports for mineral group 1-6, 8, 9, 9A, 10, 11 and 12 exploration licences and assessment leases that overlie or underlie a subsurface mining lease or are stratified between subsurface mining leases, where that mining lease remains in force, will not be released for any reports submitted after the grant of the associated mining lease. 5 years after lodgement of the report, data that is eligible to be released after 5 years (refer to Redaction guide Appendix 2) and baseline geological data (refer to Redaction guide glossary) may be released from areas not covered by a current mining lease.
- In limited circumstances where an authority is relinquished, authority holders may apply for extended confidentiality provisions that delay the release of annual reports and data for 5 years or more after lodgement, as opposed to immediate release upon relinquishment.

Additional reports (including coal (Group 9) and mining leases) may be released in the future following further consultation.

Do I have to redact annual reports that I have previously lodged?

No. It is your choice whether to redact parts of an annual report that you have previously lodged. If you decide not to redact, then you do not need to do anything. Your original report will be opened to the public six months after the list of eligible reports is published.

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 in the Redaction guide.

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 eligible reports is published, to inform MEG that they want to redact information from an annual report.

MEG will publish the eligible report lists on 31 March each year. Authority holders will then have until 30 September to notify MEG that they want to redact their report.

This information, and the listing of eligible reports, is available on the [MEG webpage](#).

How do I request a copy of historical reports?

You can find details of how to request a copy of historical reports in the Redaction guide.

Authority holders, and agents who are authorised to act for the authority holder can request copies of historical reports. The report will only be supplied to the email address that is specified as the authorised person in the Titles Administration System (TAS).

All authority holders should ensure that their contact details are correct in the Titles Administration System (TAS) before requesting any reports. For any changes to contact details contact titles@regional.nsw.gov.au.

What format do I need to submit the redacted reports in?

Your redacted report will simply be a copy of your original report in PDF format with the redaction applied. You can request an example of how to apply redaction to a PDF from redaction@regional.nsw.gov.au.

If your report had attached data, this data set must be provided with the redacted report. Data can be provided in its original format.

Can information that was attached to an annual report be redacted?

Yes, in some instances. The standard process used for redaction applies and is outlined in the Redaction guide.

How do I submit redacted reports?

Redacted reports are submitted via Titles Management System (TMS).

A guide for submitting redacted reports via TMS is available on the MEG webpage.

You can find further details of how to submit redacted reports and data in the Redaction guide.

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

You will have the option to request a review of MEG's decision. This review will be performed by the Redaction Review Group. In cases where a redaction request has been refused by the redaction review group, an authority holder can seek an independent review. An independent technical expert with relevant experience in the resources sector will be engaged. To appeal a decision, direct the appeal in writing to redaction@regional.nsw.gov.au. The decision of the appeal will be final.

How do I request a review of a redaction assessment?

You can find further details of how to request a review of a redaction assessment in the Redaction guide.

What will occur if I have requested redaction and have not supplied my redacted report within 12 months of publication of the eligible report list?

If no redacted report has been provided to MEG within 12 months of the publication of the reports eligible for release 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 eligible for release list?

Where no notification of intention to redact is received by MEG within six months of the publication of the reports eligible for release list, the original report will be released.

Can I have an extension to redact my reports?

No, the timeframes outline in the Annual report release policy are final.

Are partial relinquishment and final reports included in the Annual report release policy?

Where an authority is relinquished, the public release of any annual reports, partial relinquishment reports and final reports for that authority is permitted under the Mining Regulation 2016 (clause 64). In the case of partial relinquishment of an authority, public release of the partial relinquishment report is permitted.

The Annual report release policy includes new guidance for relinquished authorities, including an option for authority holders to apply for extended confidentiality provisions in limited circumstances. Where none of the limited circumstances for extended confidentiality provisions apply, or where an application for extended confidentiality provisions is sought and refused, annual reports, partial relinquishment reports and final reports will be publicly released once the authority to which the report relates ceases to be in force. In the case of partial relinquishment of an authority, the partial relinquishment report will be publicly released.

Will community consultation reports, environmental management and rehabilitation reports, work programs, and activity and expenditure spreadsheets be released under the Annual report release policy?

Only annual exploration reports and the associated geoscientific data will be released under the Annual report release policy. Community consultation reports, environmental management and rehabilitation reports, work programs, and activity and expenditure spreadsheets will not be released.

Formerly, the *Annual activity reporting guideline* (July 2015 to December 2020) required annual submission of additional report components for certain authorities. These included:

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

In addition, the *Exploration guideline: work programs for prospecting titles* (July 2015 to December 2020) required the resubmission annually of the work program in conjunction with annual activity reports.

The annual activity reporting guideline was last updated in October 2022 and no longer requires the annual submission of community consultation reports and activity summary and expenditure table. The work program guideline was updated in December 2020 to remove the requirement for annual resubmission of work programs.

Annual Community Consultation Reports and Environmental Management and Rehabilitation Compliance Reports are not governed by clause 59 and 64 of the Mining Regulation 2016 and are therefore not covered by the Annual report release policy. Those that have been submitted under previous annual activity reporting guidelines will not be released under the Annual report release policy.

Work programs that were submitted under the previous work program guideline will not be released under the Annual report release policy.

Where activity and expenditure data are submitted with an annual report through TMS, these data will **not** be released after a 5-year confidentiality period has lapsed and will remain confidential for the life of the authority. Activity and expenditure data spreadsheets that were submitted under previous annual activity reporting guidelines will not be released under the Annual report release policy.

What is a Mineral Group?

Prospecting and mining authorities granted under the *Mining Act 1992* are typically granted for a group of minerals. These are defined in Schedule 2 of the Mining Regulation 2016 and will be specified in the authority conditions.

I have Group 7 (opal) in my authority. Does this policy apply to me?

Annual reports for opal prospecting licences and mineral claims within an opal prospecting area will not be released under the Annual report release policy.

Annual reports for exploration licences and assessment leases that include Group 7 minerals but are located outside of an opal prospecting area will be released. For example, if an exploration licence or assessment lease is held in respect to multiple mineral groups and one of those groups is Group 7, the inclusion of Group 7 within that authority will not prevent the release of annual reports related to that authority.

Is data redactable?

Geoscientific data (such as surface or drillhole geochemistry or geophysical data) is not redactable. Appendix 2 of the Annual report Redaction guide lists the 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 and are not negotiable.

Do I have to re-submit my data (Group 1-6, 8, 10-12)?

If a historic annual report contained data, this data must be provided with the redacted report. All documents that were part of the original report must be resubmitted as part of the redaction process. Data can be provided in the original format and does not need to be tabular or in MEG data templates.

Formerly, in the Annual report release policy version 1.0, authority holders were required to provide any data that was not originally in tabular format, in current MEG data templates in tabular format. This requirement has been removed for Version 2.0 of the Annual report release policy.

How does the Department guarantee confidentiality of my reports and data?

The Department has governance arrangements in place to manage confidential information in accordance with the Mining Act and Mining Regulation. Section 365 of the *Mining Act 1992* governs disclosure of information. Clause 64 of the Mining Regulation 2016 outlines the legislated confidentiality of reports.

Currently all exploration reports are stored within the DIGS system, and this will continue. The process of transferring reports from TMS to DIGS, and the process of making DIGS reports public, contains QA/QC to ensure that reports are not made public in contradiction to the legislated confidentiality provisions set out in the Mining Act and Mining Regulation.

Where an application for extended confidentiality provisions has been made and approved, MEG will maintain a register of authorities with reports and data that are not eligible for release, and the period agreed to. The process of making DIGS reports public contains QA/QC to ensure that reports and data are not made public in contradiction to agreed extended confidentiality provisions.

Under what circumstances may MEG refuse my application for extended confidentiality provisions?

Extended confidentiality provisions will not be applied in the below circumstances:

- Where a report has already been publicly released.
- Where an area is being relinquished with no spatial overlap by a subsequent or related authority.

- Where an area is subject to an application that has not yet been determined (i.e., exploration licence application (ELA), assessment lease application (ALA) or mining lease application (MLA)).

Where an authority is wholly or partially relinquished, and an application over the area has not been determined, the public release of reports is permitted. Where an application has been made over an area that is currently held under an authority, the release of reports and data for the current authority will continue in line with the standard provisions for a current authority (outlined in Table 3 of the Annual report release policy), until that authority is relinquished.

The 'confidentiality status' field in Titles Management System (TMS) says that my reports or data are 'open file' or 'confidential 5 years'. Will my files be made open file automatically?

When a report is lodged via TMS, the 'confidentiality status' field is automatically populated based on the report or data document category and cannot be edited. The confidentiality status is generated based on:

- The type of report submitted (eg if the report is a final or partial relinquishment report, all files will be marked as 'open file')
- The 'document category' selected for the file uploaded
 - **Documents:** if the attachment is an Annual report Part A, it will automatically flag as confidential '5 years'. If the attachment is an Annual report Part B, it will automatically flag as confidential 'life of title'.
 - **Data:** Data confidentiality is based on Appendix 2 of the Annual report Redaction guide. In general, a raw data document category will be flagged as confidential '5 years' (excluding coal quality analytical data) and interpreted data and products will be flagged as confidential 'life of title'.

The confidentiality status recorded in TMS does not mean that the report or data file will automatically be made open file at the timing displayed. There is no automation set up in TMS that would result in the inadvertent release of the report/data.

The Department has governance arrangements in place to manage confidential information. The process of transferring reports from TMS to DIGS, and the process of making DIGS reports public, contains QA/QC to ensure that reports are not made public in contradiction to the legislated confidentiality provisions set out in the Mining Act and Mining Regulation or agreed extended confidentiality provisions.

Who in the Department can access my reports and data?

Access to reports and confidential data is afforded to MEG staff who receive and assess geological reports and data, and MEG staff (including the Resources Regulator) who use the information contained within the reports. Staff in government sign a confidentiality agreement on commencement of employment.

Will reports from authorities that have approved group reporting require redaction?

Currently authorities with approved group reporting are generally associated with mining leases which have not been included in the revised Annual report release policy.

Annual reports for exploration licences and assessment leases that were historically group reported under an approved reporting group with a mining lease, where that mining lease remains in force, will not be released. This is to be consistent with not releasing mining lease reports.

However, 5 years after lodgement of the report, data that is eligible to be released after 5 years (refer to Redaction guide Appendix 2) and baseline geological data (refer to Redaction guide Glossary) may be released from areas not within the footprint of a current mining lease. This data may be released as part of the Annual Report Release Data Digitisation Project, whereby historic data from DIGS reports is being digitised and tabulated by MEG for public release via MinView. Data will not be released where there is a spatial overlap with a current mining lease. Authority holders will not be required to resubmit any data/information.

I have a surface EL overlying a sub-surface ML, or a subsurface EL that underlies or is stratified within MLs. Will my reports be released?

Annual reports for exploration licences and assessment leases that overlie or underlie a subsurface mining lease or are stratified between subsurface mining leases, where that mining lease remains in force, will not be released for any reports submitted after the grant of the associated mining lease.

The Annual report release policy includes new guidance for relinquished authorities, including an option for authority holders to apply for extended confidentiality provisions in limited circumstances. Relinquished depth restricted exploration licences and assessment leases, that overlie, underlie or are stratified between subsurface mining leases, are included within the limited circumstances where these provisions apply.

5 years after lodgement of the report, data that is eligible to be released after 5 years (refer to Redaction guide Appendix 2) and baseline geological data (refer to Redaction guide glossary) may be released from areas not within the footprint of a current mining lease. These data may be released as part of the Annual report release policy Data Digitisation Project, whereby historic data from DIGS reports is being digitised and tabulated by MEG for public release via MinView. Authority holders will not be required to resubmit any data/information.

I have partially relinquished an EL or AL due to grant of an ML. Will my reports be released?

The Annual report release policy includes new guidance for relinquished (wholly or partially) authorities, including an option for authority holders to apply for extended confidentiality provisions in limited circumstances. Relinquishment of an EL or AL due to the grant of a mining lease is included within the limited circumstances where these provisions apply.

Authority holders may apply for an exemption from submission of a partial relinquishment or final report in these limited circumstances.

In the case of partial relinquishment, the current authority remains active, as such reports and data submitted will continue to be released in alignment with the standard release schedule, outlined in the policy for current authorities.

What if I have a confidentiality condition on my mining lease or formerly had this condition?

The reference to confidentiality of reports and ‘flow-on’ authorities has now been removed from all mining lease conditions.

Reports for any Group 1-6 & 10 exploration licences and assessment leases that were formerly excluded from release under the initial Annual report release policy due to this former licence condition on some mining leases are now being released.

Why are ‘flow-on’ authorities now being released?

The reference to confidentiality of reports and ‘flow-on’ authorities has now been removed from all mining lease conditions. As such, all exploration licences and assessment leases reports will now be treated the same for the purposes of the Annual report release policy.

Why is MEG not releasing reports for Mining Leases?

Mining lease reports mostly contain resource definition drilling data. The focus of the NSW minerals strategy is making exploration data available to explorers. Exploration licence and assessment lease reports contain the historical exploration data from discovery through to defining a resource. It is this data that is most valuable to explorers.

Annual reports for other authorities (including mining leases) may be released in the future following further consultation.

Why is MEG taking a different approach to different report types and mineral groups?

The NSW Government has committed to making historical exploration data available as part of the NSW Minerals Strategy. MEG has determined the report types and data that will be of greatest benefit to explorers in New South Wales to make it the premier destination for mining investment in Australia, and to support growing global demand for minerals.

Annual reports for other authorities may be released in the future following further stakeholder consultation.

What Group 9 (coal) data is considered baseline geological data, and coal quality analytical data?

Refer to the Redaction guide and Annual report release policy. Baseline geological data is defined in the Glossary as borehole locations, rehabilitation status, borehole metadata, downhole surveys, geological logging, geophysical and wireline logging, geotechnical logging and sampling, formation depths, seam details, core and chip photos, water observations, and other sampling such as hydrogeochemistry.

Baseline geological data will be released once 5 years have passed since the lodgement of the report or once the authority to which the report relates ceases to be in force.

Coal quality analytical data will remain confidential for the life of the authority.

Will the definitions of baseline geological data and coal quality analytical data be modified in the future?

The definitions of baseline geological data and coal quality analytical have been developed as part of the 2024 Annual report release policy and consulted on with industry and key stakeholder groups. Further revisions to the definition are not anticipated.

I have a Group 9 (coal) authority. Will I have to resubmit my data for release?

Baseline geological data eligible for release will be sourced from DIGS. Authority holders will not be requested to re-submit data for release.

Exploration reporting guideline

What is the Exploration reporting guideline?

The guideline Exploration reporting: a guide for reporting on exploration and prospecting in NSW (Exploration reporting guideline) sets out the structure, content and data format requirements for annual, partial relinquishment and final 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.

What are the key changes between the Exploration reporting guideline (V4.0 published February 2022) and the revised Exploration reporting guideline?

The Exploration reporting guideline was last updated in February 2021 (V4.0). The revised Exploration reporting guideline has been updated to reflect:

- the revised Annual report release policy
- the availability of a new mineral exploration data template and provide further clarification for submission of geochemistry data
- the availability of an online report building tool in TMS
- the availability of new report templates
- changes to GST status for expenditure data (GST inclusive or exclusive are allowed)
- the removal of the requirement to submit activity and expenditure data for partial relinquishment or final reports
- updated advice regarding submission of large files (>250 MB)
- general administrative updates.

Table 5 outlines the key changes to the Exploration reporting guideline.

Table 5 Summary of key changes to the Exploration reporting guideline

Section	Subheading	Changes
Document		Administrative updates – updated format, website links and contact details
Application		Updated advice regarding the provision of reports for mining leases in respect of an ancillary mining activity or activities only (no longer required)
Reporting requirements for authorities	General	Information only. No changes to reporting requirements. Extensions and exemptions – new section provides guidance for seeking an extension or exemption and legislative reference Confidentiality – new section refers to Annual report release policy and legislative reference
	How to prepare and submit reports	New section Includes details on new report templates and online report building functions available. The use of these is optional. Activity and expenditure: • Details for compiling activity and expenditure data have been moved from Appendix 3 to this section • Expenditure can be reported as GST inclusive or exclusive • Activity and expenditure data is no longer required for partial relinquishment or final reports. TMS will be updated to reflect this • Where a combined Annual and Final report is being lodged, activity and expenditure data is required for the final year only (not the life of authority)
	How reports are assessed	New section Information only. No changes to reporting requirements.
	How reports are used by MEG	New section Information only. No changes to reporting requirements.
Report structure	Annual reports	New information added about Part A and Part B. Clarification provided for mandatory components. No changes to reporting requirements.
	Partial relinquishment reports	Clarification that data related to the relinquished area must be resubmitted to enable effective release. No changes to reporting requirements.
	Final reports	Inclusion of instructions for submitting a combined Annual and final report – additional report section ‘Exploration completed during reporting period (for combined annual and final reports only)’

Section	Subheading	Changes
Data requirements	Mineral groups 1-6, 10 and 11	Removed mineral group 8 from this section. Updated to reflect availability of new mineral template (Only versions 4.5 and 4.6 will be accepted for data submission). Updated guidance for submission of sampling and drilling data, including submission of laboratory certificates and core/chip photographs.
	Mineral groups 9 / 9A	Inclusion of Group 9A No changes to reporting requirements.
	Mineral group 8	New section Provides details on how to submit sampling and drilling data for Group 8.
	Mineral group 12	New section Provides details on how to submit sampling and drilling data for Group 12.
Submitting reports and digital data	Method of lodgement	Includes details of new online report building function available.
	File size limits / submitting large files	Updated guidance for file size limits and submission of large files, including the option for authority holders to use their own secure large file transfer application for provision of data to MEG.
	Core and chip photos	Guidance has been moved into Section 3. Mineral groups 1-6, 10 & 11 – Core and chip photos are not mandatory however should be provided for significant intercepts or intervals showing key lithological features that would be of interest to future explorers. Mineral groups 8, 9/9A & 12 - Core and chip photos are required.
Appendix 2		Updated to reflect Appendix 2 of the revised Annual report Redaction guide. Clarification provided that data may be disclosed once 5 years have passed since the lodgement of the report or once the authority to which the report relates ceases to be in force. Drilling data category: • Sample details – Now excludes Group 9 and Group 9A • Sample geochemistry - Now excludes Group 9 and Group 9A • Coal quality analytical data – New category included for Group 9 and Group 9A (confidential for life of authority)

How does the Exploration reporting guideline align with the release of reports and data under Clause 64 of the Mining Regulation 2016?

The Exploration reporting guideline sets out the requirements to submit the annual exploration reports and associated data in two parts. Part A will include data and information that will be publicly released 5 years after submission and Part B will include 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.

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 lease / 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.

How does the Exploration reporting guideline align with Exploration Guideline: Annual activity reporting for prospecting titles?

The current Exploration Guideline: Annual activity reporting for prospecting titles (version 4.0 published October 2022) requires submission of:

- Annual exploration report (including, if applicable, geoscientific data)
- Annual environment management and rehabilitation compliance report

The annual exploration report must be lodged via TMS.

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

The Exploration reporting guideline sets out the form and content of the annual exploration report required under the Exploration Guideline: Annual activity reporting for prospecting titles.

Do I still need to resubmit a community consultation report annually?

No. The Annual activity reporting guideline was last updated in October 2022 and no longer requires the annual submission of community consultation reports. Refer to the Exploration code of practice: Community consultation for further information.

Do I still need to resubmit activity and expenditure and work program completion spreadsheets annually?

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

The annual activity reporting guideline was last updated in October 2022 and no longer requires the annual submission of activity and expenditure and work program completion spreadsheets.

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 a report in Titles Management System (TMS)?

A TMS report submission guide is available on the MEG webpage <https://meg.resourcesregulator.nsw.gov.au/mining-and-exploration/compliance-and-reporting/exploration-reporting>.

Can I still submit a report in EROL?

No, the former report lodgement system EROL has been decommissioned. All exploration reports must be submitted via TMS.

How do I submit large data files?

Guidance for uploading large data files is provided in the Exploration reporting guideline.

Large files can be uploaded via TMS (for all files less than 1 GB). Files that exceed 1GB can be submitted via LaFix, the authority holder's preferred secure file transfer application, or via a digital device (USB/Hard drive etc).

LaFix can be accessed via: <https://meg.resourcesregulator.nsw.gov.au/geological-survey/products-and-data/exploration-reports/online-services/large-file>

How do I report on an opal prospecting licence?

Opal prospecting licences or mineral claims granted under Part 9 or Part 10 of the *Mining Act 1992*, within Opal Prospecting Area do not have any requirements to submit annual reports.

Note that for authorities granted under Part 3 of the *Mining Act 1992*, as a standard exploration licence, that includes Group 7, then the reporting requirements are as set out under S163c.

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

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

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 report is not in the prescribed format (e.g. Not submitted in Part A and Part B format, or having duplicate documents as Part A and Part B, missing components, illegible figures, and not addressing key information required).
- Geoscientific data:
 - Data files are missing
 - Data supplied doesn't match sampling / drilling metrics mentioned in the report body.
 - Failing to provide data in the current templates and with accompanying dictionaries and data definition.
 - Mixing of assay data from different laboratories or where multiple assay methods have been used.
 - Not using correct formats for geophysical data and/or not providing an acquisition report.

Why are mining studies, financial modelling, product optimisation etc required in the 'Exploration' report?

The Exploration reporting guideline includes both exploration and assessment/mining lease reporting requirements. Summaries of mining studies, financial modelling, product optimisation etc are only required for assessment leases and mining leases. 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 summarise all 'surveys and other operations' – i.e. reporting is not strictly limited to on ground exploration.

Is the report structure set out in the Exploration reporting guideline mandatory?

Yes. The standard format of reports outlined in the Exploration reporting guideline reflect the requirements for reports (clause 62 of the Mining Regulation). These were gazetted in October 2021 with the release of version 3.0 of the Reporting Guideline.

Do I 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, as separate documents. The standard format of reports outlined in the Exploration reporting guideline reflect the requirements for reports (clause 62 of the Mining Regulation). These were gazetted in October 2021 with the release of version 3.0 of the Reporting Guideline.

Why do I have to submit my annual report in two parts?

Under changes introduced in the to the Mining Regulation 2016 (clause 64), all annual reports and associated data can be publicly released 5 years after submission.

Following industry consultation on the Annual report release policy via the Annual Report Release Consultation Working Group, an allowance was made for proprietary and commercially sensitive information to remain confidential for life of the authority. This information can now be supplied in Part B, which will remain confidential while an authority remains in force. The working group also defined what proprietary/commercially sensitive information and data is.

Part A / Part B:

- Ensures confidentiality of proprietary and commercially sensitive information and data whilst an authority remains in force.
- 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.
- Simple format that is easy to produce and replicate yearly if there is no proprietary or commercially sensitive information to include.

Whilst not everyone will have proprietary or commercially sensitive information to report on an annual basis, the Guideline takes a consistent approach for all authorities held in NSW. As progression is made through stages of exploration/assessment to mining over the life of a project, it is more likely that information that is proprietary or commercially sensitive will be obtained. The division of annual reports into Part A and Part B facilitates confidentiality for all authority holders, and benefits those who hold proprietary or commercially sensitive information.

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.

What is the difference between ‘conclusions and recommendations’ and ‘interpretation and discussion’ in the Exploration reporting guideline?

- Conclusions from all reportable exploration activities and recommendations for future work are a summary and do not include detail of activities.
- 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.

How do I apply for an extension or exemption from reporting?

An application for an extension or exemption must be lodged via TMS. Guidance is provided in the Exploration reporting guideline, and the process is outlined in the TMS Guide - Lodging exploration reports, data and requests in TMS.

An application for an extension of time to lodge a report or an exemption from reporting must be done in accordance with the Mining Regulation 2016 (clauses 67 and 68).

- Extension requests must be lodged not less than 15 days before the date the report is required to be lodged
- Exemption requests must be lodged not less than 30 days before the date the report is required to be lodged and will only be approved in exceptional circumstances.

How do I apply for group reporting?

Guidance is provided in the [Exploration reporting guideline](#).

Group reporting is only available for contiguous mining leases that are operated as a single project. Group reporting for exploration licences and assessment leases is not accepted.

Why can't I group report exploration licences and assessment leases?

Reporting individually for exploration licences and assessment leases facilitates the release of reports, provides greater clarity on what type of exploration activities occur on specific licences, and streamlines administration for MEG and for industry.

Individual reporting on exploration licences and assessment leases was adopted in 2015 following careful consideration of the associated risks and benefits of revoking the ability to group report these licences. The decision was made for numerous reasons, including to provide greater transparency and accountability. The change was also implemented for all exploration licences and assessment leases, regardless of mineral group, size, or term of tenure.

Do I have to use the new online report building tool?

No, use of this function is optional. Authority holders may elect to continue use of their own reporting templates and lodge reports via upload of report documents and data to TMS.

This benefits of this new TMS function, if utilised, include:

- The reporting requirements are met by ensuring that all mandatory sections are populated, reducing submission errors.
- Maps required for location and access, geology and current exploration activities are still mandatory and must be uploaded to accompany the text, ensuring that reports remain a valuable resource for future explorers
- Information provided in previous years can be used to pre-populate report sections in subsequent years, including authority information and previous exploration, location and access, geology, and exploration rationale. This streamlines report submission in subsequent years.
- A PDF report will be generated for the authority holder to keep as a record, and for storage and delivery via DiGS.

My report due date falls on a weekend or public holiday. Can I submit it on the following business day?

Annual reports are due 1 calendar month after the grant anniversary date. Where the report due date falls on a weekend/public holiday, there is provision in the Interpretations Act 1987 (section 36) that allows the submission on the first following business day.

TMS operates at all times, and report submission can be completed any time in the calendar month before the due date – therefore the report can be submitted on a weekend or public holiday, or earlier than the due date if it falls on a weekend or public holiday.

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 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.

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 of the Exploration reporting guideline provides a template for capturing activity and expenditure data prior to entry of this data into TMS.

What expenditure data do I submit with a final or partial relinquishment report?

- Partial relinquishment report – There is no requirement to compile activity and expenditure data. The Activity and Expenditure table in TMS can be left blank.
- Final report – There is no requirement to compile activity and expenditure data. The Activity and Expenditure table in TMS can be left blank.
- Annual and final report – Provide Activity and Expenditure data for the final reporting period (12 months) only.

Why can't I upload an activity and expenditure spreadsheet?

The direct entry of activity and expenditure data into TMS, as opposed to using a spreadsheet, has the following advantages to industry and the Department:

- Less mandatory components for reports submitted under the Exploration Guideline: Annual Activity Reporting for Prospecting Titles.
- Spreadsheets have no validation and were often being submitted with variations which diluted the data or made it difficult to use. A fixed validated format allows for efficient internal processing and makes the data comparable and useful for analytics.
- The design of the activity and expenditure data captured in TMS drives validations to ensure that the correct data is provided for acquisition activities. This in turn reduces reports being returned.

TMS is undergoing continuous improvement. The importing of activity and expenditure data from a plain text file (e.g., CSV file) will be considered for a future release.

How is activity and expenditure data used?

Activity and expenditure information captured in TMS is used by the Department to:

- assess exploration progress against the work program
- validate exploration data and information submitted
- assign appropriate confidentiality to data
- monitor industry wide trends in exploration, environmental management, and community consultation.

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