ULTIMATUM TO GOVERNMENT

Mines minister priority

Kim Macdonald

A peak resource group has called on Colin Barnett to appoint a new minerals and petroleum minister as one of his first orders of business after the coalition was returned to government at the weekend.

The Association of Mining and Exploration Companies called for an urgent replacement for outgoing resources minister Norman Moore to initiate reforms as quickly as possible.

While Mr Moore had enjoyed widespread industry support, chief executive Simon Bennison said changes were needed because WA was far less competitive compared with international jurisdictions.

The challenge in this term of government was to help small mining and junior mineral exploration companies that were suffering under a range of additional operating expenses, taxes and levies, he said.

“There are critical issues facing the industry that need to be tackled and a delay in appointing a minister will only delay these issues being addressed,” he said.

Mr Bennison said priorities should include streamlining the approvals process, especially in relation to heritage and environment, implementing the mining rehabilitation fund and increasing co-funded drilling programs.

The Chamber of Minerals and Energy yesterday congratulated the coalition and reminded it of its campaign commitments.

These include the promised expansion of the Department of Mines and Petroleum’s approvals tracking scheme and the creation of an online biodiversity, water and cultural heritage database and virtual library.

“The resource sector welcomed the Premier strongly ruling out additional levies and taxes on the resource sector — such as the train levy proposed by the WA Nationals,” the Chamber said.

The Association of Mines and Metals said the new mines minister will be expected to build on progress made last term.

“The WA Government has been a fierce advocate at the Federal level of industry’s needs, including a stable and balances taxation framework, and workplace relations reforms necessary to increase our nation’s productivity levels,” AMMA executive director, industry, Scott Barklamb said. “This responsibility will also be inherited by the new mines minister.”

Mr Barnett said yesterday he would not wait for final results in each seat before naming his Cabinet.

Terry Redman, who was agriculture and housing minister, was considered a contender for the mining portfolio, but looks likely to lose his seat of Warren-Blackwood.

Ingham plucked by US investors

The head of Australian poultry producer Ingham has agreed to sell the 96-year-old family business to US-based private equity group TPG Capital.

Billionaire Bob Ingham said he and his family would retain the Ingham Racing business as well as a substantial property portfolio that is surplus to the operations of Ingham Enterprises.

He said the day-to-day operations of Ingham would continue as usual under the direction of chief executive officer Kevin McKean and his team.

“An important part of the decision for me was finding a buyer who would ensure that our custom- ers will continue to receive the highest level of service and our employees would be well looked after,” Mr Ingham said. “I believe I have found that in TPG.”

In July, Mr Ingham said he would serve his 20-year contract with the chickens busi- ness his family has owned for 96 years, although, at the time, he said he would take several months to find a buyer.

Ingham Enterprises is Austra- lia’s biggest integrated poultry pro- ducer, with Raiauda the other major player.

Ingham employs 8000 people in Australia.

Commercial gain: Argyle between the two major parties helped Perth buck the national radio advertising trend, which was down 1.3 per cent.

Election campaign a winner for radio advertising

Peter Kerr

The State election provided a brief respite for media players from struggling advertising markets, with the campaign triggering an 11.6 per cent surge in ads last month.

According to Commercial Radio Australia, Perth recorded growth in radio advertisements of 11.4 per cent last month to a total of $7.99 million.

“Perth continued to perform strongest out of the five metropoli- tan markets and was buoyed in Feb- ruary with the upcoming State election,” CRA chief executive Joan Warner said.

The Liberal Party’s radio adver- tisements attacking Labor’s Metro- net rail plans at the airport sparked one of the biggest battles of the cam- paign.

“Labor was forced to spend val- uable cash to rebut the claims, which centred around the distance of stations from the airport’s termi- nals, and Labor even sought advice about the legality of the Liberals’ claims.”

The advertising boost also dragged the national figures higher by 0.4 per cent to $52 million in the month.

Excluding Perth, the rest of the market was down 1.3 per cent in February.

But according to the figures, com- piled by Deloitte, the overall mar- ket is still weak and over the first eight months national spending on radio advertisements fell by about 2 per cent to $442 million for the five metropolitan markets.

Grow cautious consumers, analysts at investment bank Gold- man Sachs said they didn’t expect conditions to improve until the first half of next year. They retained a sell recommendation on radio-ex- posed stocks Fairfax Media and APN News and Media.

You cannot be Sirius but you can ride in its slipstream

SNIPIFEX

Nick Sas

Those exploration companies sitting in the doldrums may be sick of it, but walking around the streets of West Perth it is not long before the words Sirius Resources pop up.

Last week Sirius’ ‘geology plays Sheffields Resources, Muta- ris Resources and Buxton Resources all had significant share price gains on the back of the

Sirsus’ Bollinger discovery.

Another company attempting to sail in Sirius’ slipstream is the initial public offering from Perth-based Classic Minerals.

The company’s flagship project is located in the Fraser-Albany mobile belt, which the company says “further to the north hosts the 4.4 million ounces Havana and Tropicana gold deposits and 40km to the south hosts the recently discovered and highly significant Sirius Resources Nova sulphide deposit”.

The company is offering 22.5 million shares at an issue price of 20c a share to raise up to $4.5 million. Although the difficulties in the IPO market over the past 12 months have been well documented, its association with the most successful company over that period will do it no harm.

Just to spice things up, the company also has an exploration target called Mount Maitland West, which it says is a “Veelirrie type, valley calcrete uranium deposit”.

Also with the junior uranium market the way it is, investors will, more than likely, be inclined to side with the Fraser Range prospect as an impetus to invest.

The closing date for the offer is April 5 with an expected listing date of April 19.

One company that has been setting the junior exploration scene on fire is Perth-based Antipa Minerals and its Citadel project, 100km north of Newcrest’s Telfer gold-copper mine.

Antipa has maintained a mid-December share price rise—after its stock was limping at 46c for most of 2012— to finish Friday trade at 20c.

Late last week, Antipa announced that it had finished three drill holes at Calibre prospect, delivering 270m to 380m intersections of gold, copper, silver and small elements of tungsten sulphide mineralisation.

Big-width sulphide mineralisation is one of the few things that gets the market excited in WA-based exploration plays, and it has responded accordingly.

The company’s drilling program is continuing for the next four weeks.

“There’s no doubt many keen investors will be keeping a close watch on it.”