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PRESS RELEASE FROM THE PREMIER, MR. DUNSTAN.

MINING ACT.

29.6.72.

Mining laws providing the framework for a new era of mineral exploration and discovery in South Australia will come into effect next Monday, July 3rd, the Premier, Mr. Dunstan, announced today.

Changes in the Mining Act, passed in the last session of Parliament, were proclaimed by Executive Council today.

Mr. Dunstan, who is also Minister of Mines, said the revised Act would provide a sound, rational basis for exploration and development.

"Recent discoveries in South Australia and elsewhere have demonstrated the potential of our underground resources and pointed up the need for Government encouragement of the experience and often risky exploration needed to prove these resources.

"And it has become increasingly apparent that official encouragement of mining activities must be combined with concern for the environment.

"The new Act has provided both for encouragement and control", Mr. Dunstan said.

For instance, an Extractive and Rehabilitation Fund will be set up.

Quarry operators will contribute to the fund proportioned to their production and these funds will be used to rehabilitate old quarry areas.

One of the most important aspects of the amended Act is that it is expected to improve access to potentially valuable mineral areas where exploration has been extremely difficult in the past.

Freehold land will be placed on the same basis throughout the State, regardless of the manner in which it was originally granted.

At the same time, safeguards have been provided for holders of surface rights and existing mineral rights holders have been given special transition and compensation facilities.

"Past arrangements governing access were inconsistent and cumbersome", Mr. Dunstan said.

Before 1889, South Australian land grants included the ownership of minerals on or under the ground, but land grants since then have vested mineral rights in the land.

This created two types of land for exploration and mining purposes, "mineral land" with rights held by the Crown and "private" land in which they were vested in the freehold owner.

Whether land was "mineral" or "private" depended entirely on the date of the original grant.

The new Act provides for resumption of all mineral rights to the Crown, and has laid down transition and compensation arrangements for present holders of mineral rights.

Any mining in operation on private land or starting within two years of proclamation (July 3) will be permitted to take place outside of the Act.

Royalties paid on any minerals brought into production within ten years of the proclamation will continue to be paid to the former owners until the mine ceases operation.

The Act has also laid down machinery for giving written notice of entry to prospect on freehold land and consideration of objections.

Further protection for landowners has been provided by clauses requiring prospectors to convert mineral claims to mining leases before actual mining operations can begin.

Such leases will specify that there should be progressive restoration and rehabilitation of land and payment of rent to the owner.

Prospectors will be able to take samples but will not be permitted to use heavy earth-moving equipment without consent of the landowner or Warden.

Only owners of freehold land will be entitled to peg stone, sand, gravel and shell on their land where mining can cause hardship out of proportion to the relatively low value of the minerals.

Present provisions for the granting of exploration rights have been simplified.

An "Exploration Licence" will supersede the present "Special Mining Leases" and will permit exploration for all minerals except precious stones.

Licences will be issued for periods of up to two years and will normally be granted over areas not exceeding 2,500 square kilometres (about 1,000 square miles).

The holder of an Exploration Licence will have the right to obtain a Mining Title for any minerals found.

Special arrangements have been made for precious stones, including opal mining, Mr. Dunstan said.

"They will be designed to reserve known areas for small prospectors and to make provision for reasonable restoration of the ground after use.

"The proposals have been submitted to representatives of the miners at Coober Pedy and Andamooka fields and are generally acceptable."

Boundaries of precious stones fields will be defined and the opal fields will be declared as such. A special type of Miner's Right (a Precious Stones Prospecting Permit) will be required before a claim can be pegged.

To prevent further land destruction of the type that has taken place at Andamooka and Coober Pedy the use of bulldozers will not be permitted except on a registered claim and operators will be required to tidy up cuts before going on to a new claim.

Provision has been made to enable joint operation of up to four adjoining claims by mutual agreement of the claimholders.

A general provision provides substantial penalties for illegal mining.

The Premier said this had become an increasingly serious problem in South Australia, particularly in the opal fields.