

Question On Notice No. 4788 asked in the **Legislative Council** on **9 May 2007** by **Hon Giz Watson**

Question Directed to the: **Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister for State Development**

Minister responding: **Hon E.S. Ripper**

Parliament: **37 Session: 1**

Question

On 30 September 2004, the State Development Minister granted the Mitchell Plateau Joint Venture an extension to submit detailed proposals to develop the Mitchell Plateau bauxite resource in the Kimberley region. This deadline was extended from 30 September 2004 to 30 April 2005, and I ask -

(1) Have any further extensions been granted by the Western Australian Government to the Rio Tinto-lead Mitchell Plateau Joint Venture or any other parties for the submission of proposals for the development of the Mitchell Plateau bauxite resource (incorporating the area within Temporary Reserve TR7005610) in the Kimberley region?

(2) If yes to (1),

(a) when is the latest date of their expiry; and

(b) what are the corporate entities and their trading names to which extensions has been given?

(3) If no to (1), or the latest date of expiry of any extension granted by Government has now passed -

(a) has the Rio Tinto-lead Mitchell Plateau Joint Venture or any other parties submitted proposals or preliminary plans to the Government for development of the Mitchell Plateau bauxite resource in the Kimberley region; and

(b) if no to (3a), what does the Government plan to do about development of the Mitchell Plateau bauxite resource and by when?

(4) Has the Government or its Agencies been holding talks with United Minerals Corporation or any other parties in relation land covered by Temporary Reserve TR7005610 at the Mitchell Plateau with regard to the resources within the TR?

(5) If yes to (4), with whom and on what dates?

(6) Has the Government or its Agencies been holding talks with United Minerals Corporation or any other parties about the possibility of the Government cancelling any rights of the Rio-Tinto-lead Mitchell Plateau Joint Venture to Temporary Reserve TR7005610 at the Mitchell Plateau and reallocating those resource rights to a joint venture consortium involving United Minerals Corporation and any other or associated parties and/or major foreign alumina producers such as CHALCO or United Company RUSAL?"

(7) If yes to (6), with whom and on what dates?

Answered on 29 May 2007

(1) Yes.

(2) (a) 31 December 2007.

(b) The Mitchell Plateau Bauxite Co Pty Limited representing the Mitchell Plateau Joint Venture ("MPJV") comprising Rio Tinto and Alcoa of Australia.

(3) Not applicable.

(4) The Government and its agencies have been communicating in recent months with United Mineral Corporation ("UMC") and other parties in the course of normal operations to provide information that is on the public record in relation to the status of the occupancy rights to Temporary Reserve 70/5610H ("TR") at the Mitchell Plateau and certain public record geological data pertaining to the resources within the TR.

(5) Apart from UMC, in June / July 2004, the Department of Industry and Resources wrote to the following 7 companies:

- Rusal of Russia;
- Alumina Corporation of China ("Chalco");
- Aldoga Minerals Pty Limited;
- Intermin / Red River Resources;
- Fortescue Metals;
- Hindalco of India; and
- Hancock Prospecting.

With the support of the then Minister for State Development and the agreement of the MPJV, these companies were encouraged to access the Joint Venture's geological data room for a preliminary investigation into the viability of a mining and refining project at Mitchell Plateau, as contemplated by the *Alumina Refinery (Mitchell Plateau) Agreement Act 1971*, and to report back to the Minister on their findings, if they were so inclined. In December 2004, two further companies, BHP Billiton and Alcan Bauxite, were approved to take part in this process.

(6) No.

(7) Not applicable.