



IN SEARCH OF MINERAL WEALTH: THE SOUTH  
AUSTRALIAN GEOLOGICAL SURVEY AND  
DEPARTMENT OF MINES AND ENERGY TO 1944.

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requirements for the Master of Arts degree  
in the Department of History at the  
University of Adelaide, March 1983.

This thesis does not contain any material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis does not contain any material previously published or written by another person, except when due reference is made in the text.

B.J. O'NEIL

## Abstract

The initial resistance to Government involvement in the mining industry in South Australia was facilitated by the accidental discovery, and subsequent development, of several large copper deposits, the financial restrictions upon the Government and the limited number of officials to enforce its rights, and the non-assertion of the Crown prerogative over minerals.

There was, however, a trend towards strong, centralised government in South Australia and many colonists accepted the notion of the positive role that the state could adopt in developing society. Indeed, at times during the nineteenth century, they even encouraged and welcomed state participation in, and regulation of, their affairs. But such participation, although a form of state socialism in practical terms, lacked a sound theoretical basis: it was pragmatic. Thus a set of circumstances in the latter part of that century (drought, economic depression, recession in the mining industry, the assertion of the Crown's prerogative over minerals and the emerging idea of public before private wealth) led private enterprise to transfer control for the exploration and exploitation of minerals to the Government. The state's role was generally seen to be one of assisting rather than replacing private enterprise initiatives.

Once formed, the Geological Survey and Department of Mines maintained their own momentum. Their duties (to search for minerals and water, to regulate the industry, and to initiate developments) affected the evolution and

development of the organisation. These duties strengthened the role of the Survey and Department in the industry, and by the twentieth century, few doubted that the involvement of the state in mining was not one of its 'legitimate' responsibilities. Thus there were steps towards state ownership of mining activities prior to World War I and during World War II.

Despite the importance attached by contemporaries to mining as a saviour of South Australia and the continuing faith of the administrators, Government and private enterprise in a resources boom, the Department of Mines remained a minor instrumentality of Government. The Department emerges, historically, as limited in its efficiency because of constant Government restrictions on its finance, powers and staffing. Intermittently, the Department was held to be the scapegoat for the lack of mining in South Australia by those who had urged the formation of the Department and, in particular, by the industry which looked to it for assistance.

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## Abbreviations

## a) Archival

SAA	South Australian Archives.
BRG	Business Record Group.
GRG	Government Record Group.
PRG	Private Record Group.
SRG	Society Record Group.

## b) Department of Mines

<u>AR</u>	Annual Report on the Department of Mines by the Director of Mines and Government Geologist.
<u>ARGS</u>	Annual Report of the Geological Survey.
DM	Department of Mines.

## c) Parliamentary

<u>V&amp;P</u>	Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council.
<u>SAPD</u>	South Australian Parliamentary Debates.
<u>SAPP</u>	South Australian Parliamentary Papers.
<u>HA</u>	House of Assembly.
MHA	Member of the House of Assembly.
<u>LC</u>	Legislative Council.
MLC	Member of the Legislative Council.

## d) Other

BHP	Broken Hill Proprietary Company.
E&WS	Engineering and Water Supply Department.
ICI	Imperial Chemical Industries Company.
FGS	Fellow of Geological Society.

### Conversion

The material covered in this thesis pre-dates 1944 and hence all measurements have been given in Imperial form. Also, it has been considered an unnecessary and misleading exercise to adjust the currency from the pre-decimal pound (£), shilling (s) and pence (d). Today the value of £1 would be vastly different to its decimal equivalent of \$2.

### Note on Grammar

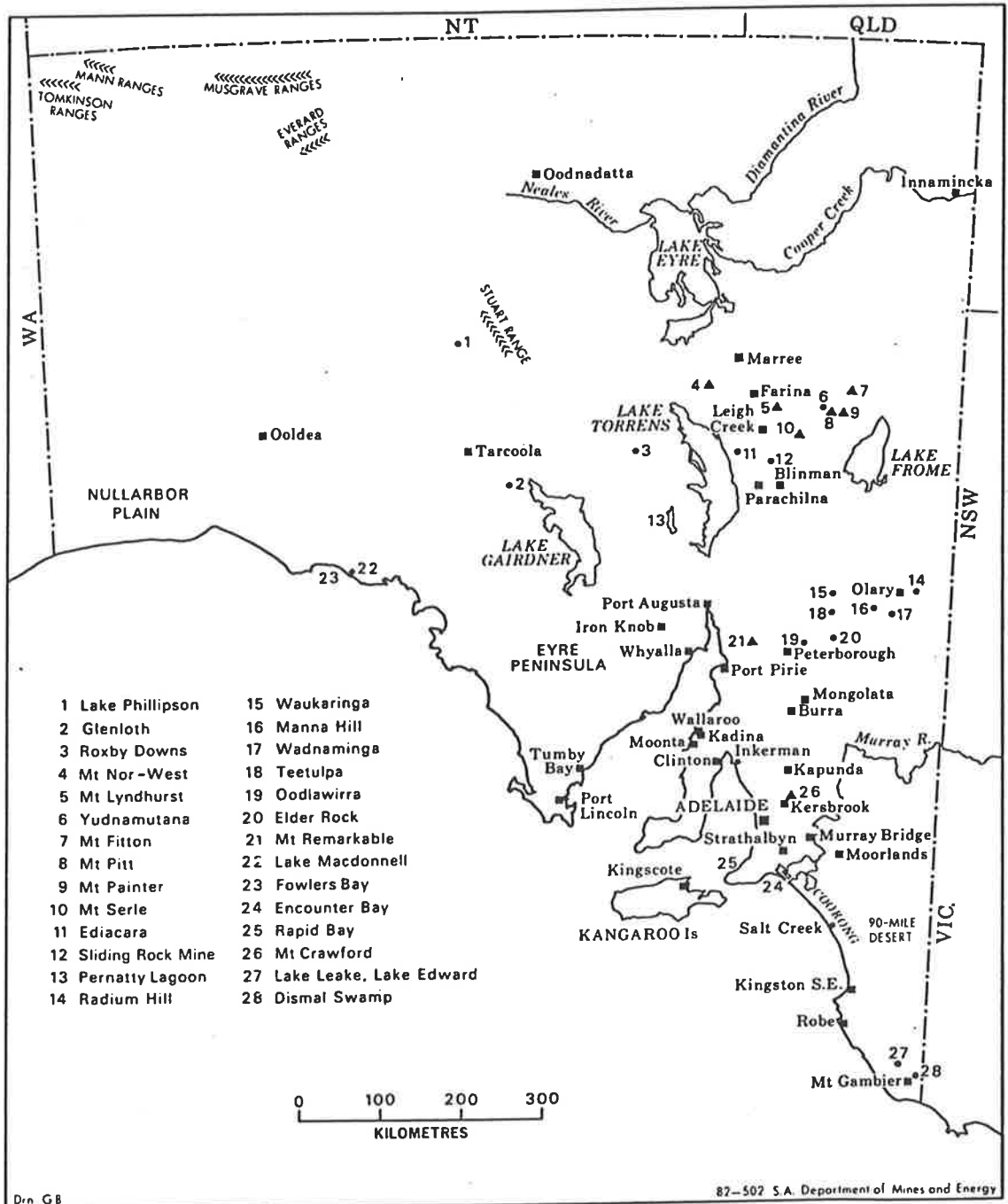
The syntax, spelling and capitalisation of the original sources have been retained throughout. The use of 'sic' has been restricted to those cases where the grammatical errors in the original sources are repeated or the intended meaning is unclear. In most cases, however, the modern usage of the names of towns and places has been adopted.

### Terminology

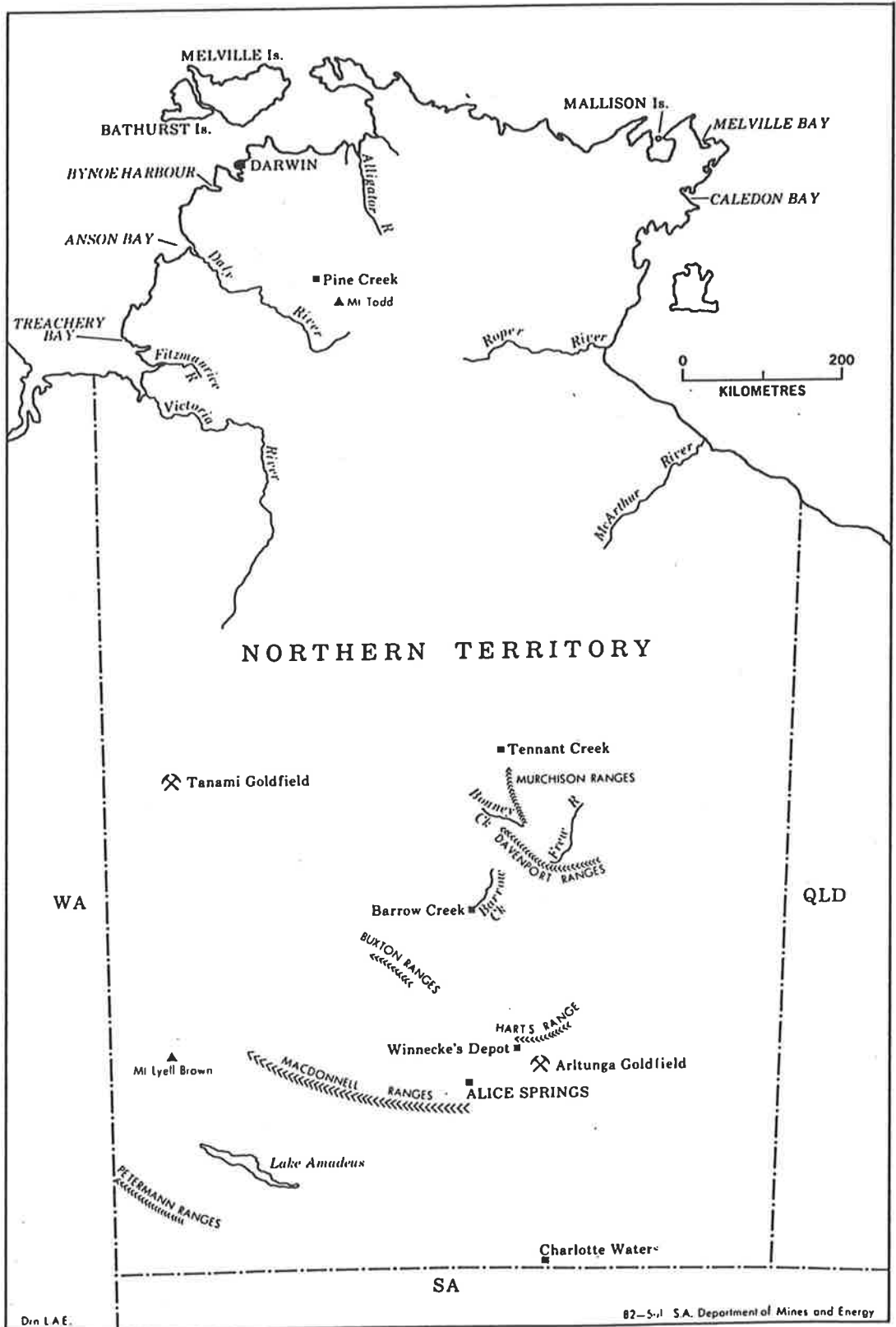
The terminology of the mineral industry is varied, therefore generalised definitions have been adopted throughout. Mining is thus interpreted broadly as the excavation of minerals, ores and rocks from the earth by a variety of methods including dredging and quarrying. A topic of major importance in the Department's activities has been that of underground water resources and this aspect is also examined throughout the thesis. Where necessary, specialist definitions have been provided but this has been kept to a minimum.

The term Geological Survey did not come into official use until 1912. However, in order to maintain the distinction between the Department of Mines and the Geological Survey, the latter term will be used instead of the earlier variants Geological Department or Office.





Locality Map, South Australia.



Locality Map, Northern Territory.