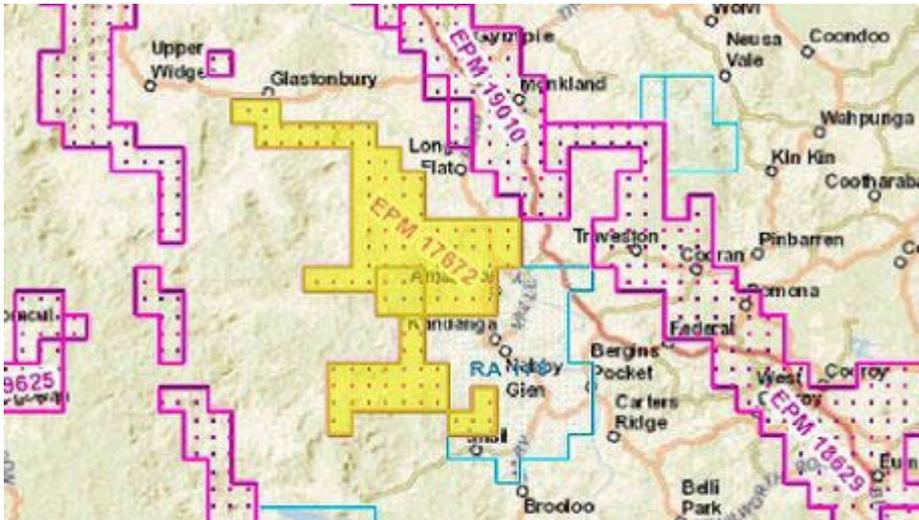


Exploration tests not in Traveston Crossing dam zone

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The area in yellow indicates the Mary Valley land where mining company Eclipse Metals has two permits to explore. Contributed MINING exploration permits that Eclipse Metals hopes to activate next year in the Mary Valley cover almost 200sq km of land stretching from Glastonbury, through Long Flat, Amamoor, Kandanga and Imbil.

Member for Gympie David Gibson said yesterday the permits had been in place since 2009 and 2010, so were not new approvals.

"They do not cover the Mary Valley land that was part of the Traveston Dam debacle and are therefore not in the restricted area," Mr Gibson said.

After the cancellation of plans to dam the Mary River at Traveston, a caveat was placed over those parts of the valley affected by the dam buy-up exempting it from future mining exploration.

According to the Department for Natural Resources and Mines, there are two granted exploration permits for minerals associated with the Eclipse Metals Ltd Mary Valley manganese project. They consist of EPM 17672 and EPM 17938, which are located about 14km south-west of Gympie.

Those sections of the map in yellow show the land covered by the permits.

Eclipse Metals spokesman Carl Popal said this week exploration for manganese deposits would begin with geologists visiting the valley to determine where to carry out test drills.

If mining went ahead, the method of extracting the manganese deposits would depend on their depth.

Mr Popal said testing would have to reveal a yield of at least 100,000 tonnes to make mining the manganese economically viable. Between 1915 and 1960, 32,700 tonnes of the ore was pulled out of the valley.

The department said both permits to explore were held by Walla Mines Pty Ltd, a subsidiary of Eclipse Metals.

EPM 17672 was granted on June 30, 2009, and EPM 17938 was granted on October 21, 2010. Both were granted for five years.

"Both granted exploration permits are located outside any restricted areas in the Mary Valley, including the restricted area that was created for the now-abandoned Traveston Dam project," the department said.

"As such, there is no restriction on mineral exploration within the land covered by EPM 17672 and EPM 17938.

"It is important to emphasise that exploration is generally non-invasive and has no lasting impact on the land.

"Authorised exploration activities that can occur on land under permit are also strictly controlled by the provisions of the Environmental Authority issued for projects by the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection.

"Information about any mining activity in a local area, including tenure applications and granted tenure, is publicly available through the Queensland Government's Local Area Mining Permit service at: