

Environmental Approvals, Speed Dating and Achieving Happily Ever After

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Abstract

Speed dating has become popular in recent years as a novel way for singles to meet each other. Arguably it increases chances of finding a romantically compatible mate as first impressions are often permanent. Some may find lifelong love after five short minutes.

The environmental approvals process can be analogous with speed dating in the sense that you need to put yourself out there to meet and greet your regulators and get the most for your buck. If it goes well, the reportedly elusive “happily ever after” can be achieved. Legislation and approval procedures rapidly change and to keep abreast of current knowledge, you need to remain attentive and receptive. It pays to find out early in the assessment process who you need to engage with and which officers will have involvement or will be responsible for assessment of your project. The Department of Mines and Petroleum (DMP) have designated Environmental Officers for Minerals Fields and the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) has multiple regional and Perth based divisions that may be involved with individual mining projects. If you are complacent, your date book may not include all the people you need to engage with, you may be at the wrong place wondering what you have done to deserve a no show, or you may miss the bell ringing to tell you that you are moving onto a brand new officer. Life happens and things change.

This presentation will explore the current environmental assessment process in WA for mining projects with lessons learnt in particular from the Sandfire Resources NL DeGrussa Copper Project. Gaining approvals in a timely manner should not be thought of as akin to finding a pot of gold at the end of a rainbow. You just need a good treasure map to get you started, a team of committed and flexible people to go looking with, set realistic goals and then hold on tight and enjoy the ride to get to happy ever after.