

Prospectors raise data mining woes

Dissent is stirring within the ranks of small-time mining operators in the Goldfields, who claim the Department of Mines and Petroleum is turning a blind eye to online hackers who are abusing the department's mining approvals process.

The practice termed scraping or data mining, was raised as a major bone of contention for junior explorers at Tuesday's Kalgoorlie workshop hosted by the DMP to foster training and online skills development.

But the session which was designed to help small players upskill with DMP programs such as Tengraph and Mineral Titles Online, triggered an outcry from industry tiddlers who said those abusing the system were creating an uneven playing field within the sector.

Those in attendance at Tuesday's meeting said data scrapers who had found a keyhole into the DMP's online database were able to see within seconds when mining tenements were surrendered or forfeited.

They said that by accessing data within a timeframe that was unrealistic to the general public it gave larger corporations a head start on applications and effectively an unfair advantage.

The situation was acknowledged by DMP Mineral Titles executive director Ivor Roberts.

'The department prefers 'self-regulation' of data mining, but is considering legislative changes if the practice continues,' Dr Roberts told the Kalgoorlie Miner yesterday.

'DMP is aware of data mining of its Tengraph and Mineral Titles online systems, which is a breach of the terms and conditions of use.'

Dr Roberts told the crowd on Tuesday that the department accepted data mining was wrong.

He said the department's online systems were being monitored to identify data mining and individuals and companies had been notified that their accounts would be suspended if breaches continued.

Greens Member for the Mining and Pastoral Region Robin Chapple said the mines department had for a long time been aware of 'warehousing the tenements', a situation exacerbated by data mining.

'This scraping, or what I call data mining, is something that shouldn't go on,' he said.

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