

Unfair tenement outrage prompts Warden's warning

SPINIFEX

■ Jasmine Bamford

The prospector's life is never an easy one. And less so when the entire mining sector is a bit on the nose.

It's tough enough competing with the industry's big kids, but from Kalgoorlie this week comes the suggestion that some in the industry have found new ways to tip the playing field in their favour.

The latest issue to fire up the State's smaller players, according to feedback from a training session run on the Department of Mines and Petroleum online systems in Kalgoorlie last week, is the suspicion that some in the industry have discovered a backdoor into DMP's databases, giving them an advantage when picking out the best available ground across the State.

Those attending Tuesday's meeting said data scrapers had found a keyhole into the DMP's

online database allowing them to see within seconds when mining tenements were surrendered or forfeited.

Outrage about unfair access to dropped tenements is as old as the system itself but the suspicion is that the latest iteration is a little more organised than it has been before and is allegedly occurring on something of an industrial scale.

Being able to get the most out of DMP's systems has always been a key advantage for savvy industry players, and there's not necessarily anything wrong with that.

But the belief this time round is that what is being used is not just a clever way of seeing and interpreting DMP data, but access to information that other industry players simply cannot get.

A list circulating at the event shows more than 30 tenements picked up immediately after having been dropped by a previous holder — some within minutes.

That list covered only three months between

September and December.

According to the list's author, the exploit has been used for at least eight to 12 months, and many more examples can be found without difficulty.

The data mining and scraping is a problem the DMP is aware of, according to its response to questions from the Kalgoorlie Miner late last week.

DMP's executive director of mineral titles, Ivor Roberts, said some companies could be violating the terms of use of its online systems.

"The department's online systems are being monitored to identify data mining and individuals and companies are notified that their accounts will be suspended if such breaches continue," he said.

"The department prefers 'self-regulation' of data mining, but is considering legislative changes if the practice continues."

— with Nick Evans

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