



MINERALS COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA

2020-21 PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the national effort to rebuild from the COVID-19 pandemic the minerals industry will continue to deliver on the substantial contribution it has made over the past 20 years and with the right mix of productivity-enhancing reforms do even more to support and sustain the Australian economy.

The Australian community has looked to its key industrial sectors to help sustain the economy through this crisis.

The minerals industry responded: implementing a strict health and hygiene regime to protect workers and the communities in which the industry operates, maintaining essential services and supporting community needs and maintaining the production that delivers the substantial royalties and company tax to fund health, education and other critical services.

The mining industry recognises that the COVID-19 pandemic, which has required companies to relocate employees, minimise the number of workers on site and institute longer shift cycles, has placed pressure on workers' relationships and mental health.

This reinforces the importance of existing industry initiatives to preserve mental health, including the MCA's leading [Blueprint for Mental Health and Wellbeing Industry guide](#) and MATES in Mining, an independent charity that offers help to workers who can be reluctant to seek it.

The MCA makes significant financial and in-kind contributions to MATES in Mining, which is also supported by site-specific company funding. The MCA encourages the Australian Government to extend funding to crucial initiatives that promote mental health and wellbeing, including MATES in Mining.

Bringing together industry, workforce, communities and the education and innovation sector is the challenge for the Australian Government in the 2020-21 Budget.

The minerals industry stands ready in this reform and rebuilding agenda. Australia has over 106 mining projects that have completed feasibility studies. The combined \$50 billion investment flowing from these projects could create over 32,000 construction jobs and 22,000 ongoing operating jobs across Australia.

The government has already outlined a series of proposed reforms which will support a faster and broader recovery, including more flexible workplaces, pragmatic environmental reforms and simpler project approvals. Yet further reforms would enable the minerals industry to play an even bigger role in underpinning a sustainable and enduring recovery.

Reforms that expand trade and investment opportunities, enhance training and skills, ensure a competitive taxation system, support the discovery of new mining regions and emerging critical minerals, target the development of Northern Australia and enable businesses to adapt and grow will all be essential to sustaining the livelihoods and living standards of Australians.

The policy and regulatory improvements outlined in this submission will help ensure that the Australian minerals industry – which has driven the nation's prosperity for decades – can maximise its contribution to economic recovery while remaining the world's leading exporter of minerals and metals in the long term.

Australia cannot take its global leadership in mining and minerals processing for granted. Overseas competition will continue to intensify and inconsistent border restrictions imposed by some states and regulatory constraints domestically may endanger the nation's ability to attract international investment.

In 2019, the resources sector generated \$289 billion of export revenue (59 per cent of total export revenue) and invested \$34 billion in new capital expenditure. Mining investment is a significant driver of economic prosperity in Australia as demonstrated by Reserve Bank of Australia calculations which

show the mining investment boom from 2003 to 2013 delivered a 13 per cent increase in household real per capita income and a 6 per cent increase in real wages.

Together, mining and the mining equipment, technology and services (METS) sector account for approximately 15 per cent of Australia's gross domestic product and support (directly and indirectly) 1.1 million jobs – around 10 per cent of Australia's total workforce.

The minerals industry generates a significant amount of revenue for state and federal governments. Company taxes and royalties paid by the industry increased by \$8 billion in 2018-19 to a record \$39.3 billion, benefiting all taxpayers through better services and infrastructure.

The resources sector has a strong record in creating highly paid, highly skilled jobs – particularly in regional areas. Average earnings in resources are \$141,000 a year, 58 per cent higher than the average for all industries, and the industry employs more than 8,600 apprentices and trainees and more than 6,600 Indigenous Australians, including in remote areas of the Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia.

The skills and training needs of both the industry and the future minerals workforce needs will require attention, including retraining and reskilling entrants from other industries affected by COVID-19. Increasingly the skills required in mining are the same as in agriculture, manufacturing, construction and defence industry. There is much scope for a shared approach in this new environment.

This response includes a more responsive and flexible vocational education and training (VET) system, building on the recently established Mining Skills Organisation Pilot. The minerals industry will accelerate 1,000 new apprenticeships through the pilot, in partnership with the Australian Government and in cooperation with the states and the Northern Territory. The government's decision to extend funding of the pilot to 30 June 2023 is a positive development.

While world economic growth is expected to contract sharply in 2020, China's stimulus policy should support demand for Australia's resources exports. The industry's ability to keep operating through the COVID-19 crisis has positioned it strongly to take advantage of the global recovery and the ongoing resources demand of developing economies.

Aside from the Chinese market, world demand for metals and minerals is likely to continue growing in the future. Over time, the growing economies of highly populated nations such as India and south-east Asia will recover and continue to grow with their expanding housing, infrastructure and manufacturing needs supporting higher demand for industrial metals such as steel, copper and aluminium.

Australia's competitors will waste no time in attempting to increase their share of the recovery.

In this context, Australia's company tax rate of 30 per cent is too high and not internationally competitive. Canada, a major mining country, has a company tax rate 4 percentage points lower than Australia. In addition, Canada recently introduced accelerated depreciation write off in response to the USA company tax rate reduction and accelerated write off rules.

The Treasurer is correct to emphasise that economic recovery will be led by the private sector and that low taxation is a critical policy setting. Future mining investment should not be put at risk by any move to increase the already high burden on the sector.

In particular, the fuel tax credit scheme, which operates to avoid taxing a vital business input, should remain in its current form.

Related to this it is important to note that the Productivity Commission has confirmed in its latest *Trade and Assistance Review* that tariff and budgetary assistance to mining is 'disproportionately small'. The commission estimates that the effective rate of assistance for mining – the ratio of total assistance to output – was just 0.2 per cent in 2018-19, the same low rate as the previous three years.

The industry looks forward to strengthening its partnership with all levels of government, suppliers (particularly a revitalised domestic manufacturing industry that can meet demand for critical supplies such as personal protective equipment) and the community in facing the shared challenge of developing and implementing targeted reforms for a stronger Australia.

Recommendations

Enhancing and adapting the skills of the future minerals workforce

- The MCA encourages the Australian Government to extend funding to crucial initiatives that promote mental health and wellbeing, including MATES in Mining
- The Australian Government should continue, in partnership with industry, to refocus skills curricula to meet future needs along the full mining and METS value chain, so as to incorporate contemporary skill sets and qualifications linked to technology for the modern mining sector (such as automation and data analytics), transferable to the METS and allied sectors
- The minerals industry will accelerate 1,000 new apprenticeships through the Mining Skills Organisation Pilot, in partnership with the Australian government and in cooperation with the states and the Northern Territory.

Job creation through investment in new and expanded minerals projects

- Encourage exploration for strategically important minerals in priority greenfield areas by:
 - Collaborating with states to expand funding for greenfield exploration incentive schemes and prioritise applications for drilling programs in the areas surveyed as part of *Exploring for the Future*
 - Prioritising recipients of tax credits under the Junior Minerals Exploration Incentive Scheme to companies exploring in areas surveyed as part of *Exploring for the Future*
 - Providing additional funding to the *Exploring for the Future* program to scope and develop a single national geological database.
- Australia's business tax system should be made more globally competitive and conducive to investment by:
 - Reducing the headline company tax rate, or
 - Introducing accelerated depreciation or an investment allowance, and
 - Retaining the fuel tax credit scheme in its current form.
- The government should create and sustain jobs through workplace relations reforms by:
 - Reforming greenfields agreements to encourage investment in new projects
 - Enabling expired enterprise agreements to be terminated more easily
 - Confining permitted content – over which protected industrial action can be taken – to matters that directly affect employers and employees
 - Encouraging flexibility and choice in employment arrangements, including by maintaining existing regulations for labour hire and service contracting
 - Permitting workers earning above the high-income threshold for unfair dismissals (currently \$148,700) to opt out of an enterprise agreement and enter into individual agreements.
- The government should continue to support multilateral trade rules and all trade agreements that expand Australia's export markets and facilitate investment

- Policies and processes to encourage international investment – both inward and outbound – should be refined:
 - As part of the restoration of routine regulatory settings for the Foreign Investment Review Board, the government should consider implementing a single process for assessing international investments into Australia against a clear set of criteria that balances the government’s objectives of attracting international capital, expanding local projects and operations and protecting sovereignty and national security.
- Opportunities to accelerate technological innovation in mining, mining equipment, technology and services and low emissions energy should be fast-tracked by:
 - Ensuring that the mining equipment, technology and services (METS) sector is fully integrated into manufacturing industry policy, programs and related plans and funding for manufacturing technology and innovation
 - Supporting bodies that enhance collaboration between the mining and METS sector and research organisations
 - Supporting public-private minerals and resources research vehicles in low emissions technology projects such as the Carbon Transport & Storage Co project in Queensland
 - Allowing for carbon capture and storage (CCS) to be funded by the Clean Energy Finance Corporation. Similarly, expanding the remit of the Australian Renewable Energy Agency so it can support clean energy and hydrogen production from Australia’s minerals resources and on-site energy sources such as bioenergy coupled with CCS.
- Amend the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility from a lender of last resort to allow greater flexibility for project loans where a market failure can be identified.

Reducing project delays while retaining environmental protections

- Effective implementation of national cabinet commitment to establish a ‘single touch’ approvals process – based on the national standards and the devolution of approvals to states and territories under bilateral agreements. The national standards and regulatory architecture to support these agreements be carefully developed to ensure they can be practically applied.
- Reforms are also needed to support development in those jurisdictions where a single touch approvals process is yet to be established. These include:
 - Coordinating state/Commonwealth processes through joint scoping of environmental assessments, supported by service charters and Commonwealth officers embedded in relevant state agencies.
 - Assessment pathways, including referrals, for Environmental Impact Assessment processes, should be risk-based, providing simpler rapid pathways for low risk and well-understood activities and environments (e.g. brownfield developments). Existing rapid decision-making mechanisms (e.g. particular manner provisions) should be fully used.
 - Approval conditions should be risk-based and outcomes focused, with model conditions for low risk or well understood activities/environments and tailored conditions for complex or site-specific risks, or where the understanding of the impacts/environment is low. Consistency between Commonwealth and state/territory and conditions is critical.
 - Establishing a simple risk-based process to consider and vary an approval, avoiding the need for referral and full assessment where changes are not material to the environmental outcome.

- Enhancing regulator performance through industry-specific training, site visits and hiring staff with industry experience or expertise to address the backlog of existing projects and ensure timely future assessments.
- Developing improved policy and guidance to support clear, consistent and accountable decision-making with effective service delivery as a key performance indicator.
- Bringing post-approval matters into the primary approval stage wherever practical and supporting remaining post-approval with clear assessment rules and timeframes.
- Mutual recognition between Commonwealth and state/territory offsets consolidated into a single requirement and the establishment of financial-based offsets mechanism for Commonwealth matters
- Work with national cabinet to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of state and territory regulation, guided by the Productivity Commission review of resource sector regulation
- Examine proposals to ensure Indigenous knowledge is better integrated into Commonwealth processes.

Enhancing partnerships with Indigenous Australians

The Australian Government should support strong relationships and outcomes from partnerships between industry and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities by:

- Extending and accelerating the Australian Government's Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBC) capacity-building program to ensure Traditional Owners can realise the full economic development opportunities arising from native title, including tailored training, services and expertise. The option of a new simplified economic vehicle for PBCs, known as the PBC Economic Vehicle Status to undertake economic development activities should also be pursued.
- Improving the stability and efficiency of the native title system by legislating long-standing and broadly-supported measures
- Continuing community engagement activities during government funded pre-competitive exploration programs such as Geoscience Australia's *Exploring for the Future*
- Provide modest government funding and administrative support to extend the Indigenous Partnerships Community of Practice, an industry and native title-sector led initiative to advance outcomes from mining related agreements and partnerships, including advancing mining-related employment, business and supply chain participation
- Supporting the recovery and further growth of the Indigenous business sector.

1. AUSTRALIAN MINING INDUSTRY OVERVIEW

- The minerals industry's number one value and commitment is the safety and health of its workforce. The mining industry has continued to support the Australian economy and regional jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic by keeping its workforce, families and communities safe and healthy.
- The minerals sector has underpinned Australia's economic prosperity for decades and its ability to remain open while implementing . Together, mining and the mining equipment, technology and services (METS) sector account for approximately 15 per cent of Australia's gross domestic product and support (directly and indirectly) 1.1 million jobs – around 10 per cent of Australia's total workforce.
- The industry is increasingly focused on long-term community partnerships and strategic investment to support sustainable long-term development outcomes.

The minerals industry's number one value and commitment is the safety and health of its workforce, where everyone who goes to work in the industry returns home safe and healthy. The mining industry has continued to support the Australian economy and regional jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic by keeping its workforce, families and communities safe and healthy.

Australia's mining industry has been the world-leader in developing industry protocols, based on official advice with the support of national resources ministers, which have enabled the industry to continue to operate safely and responsibly while delivering benefits to the Australian economy.

In 2019 these economic benefits included \$289 billion of export revenue (59 per cent of total export revenue), 240,000 people directly employed in highly-paid, highly skilled jobs and \$34 billion in new capital expenditure.¹

In addition, Australian mining supports advanced and competitive manufacturing jobs through the METS sector. Together, the mining and METS sector accounts for approximately 15 per cent of Australia's gross domestic product and support 1.1 million jobs (directly and indirectly).²

Mining investment is a significant driver of economic prosperity in Australia as demonstrated by RBA calculations which show the mining investment boom from 2003 to 2013 delivered a 13 per cent increase in household real per capita income and a 6 per cent increase in real wages.³

Mining also pays its fair share of taxes with \$39.3 billion of company taxes and royalties paid in 2018-19.⁴

More than just a driver of domestic economic growth, the Australian mining industry is the largest exporter of minerals and metals in the world. It is an essential part of the supply chains underpinning the new transportation networks, clean energy systems and modern consumer products which are improving the living standards of billions of people around the world.

Importantly, the Australian mining industry is meeting the world's growing demand for steel, energy and critical minerals with an unwavering commitment to sustainability, community engagement, rehabilitation and greenhouse gas emission reductions.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, cat. no. 5368 [International Trade in Goods and Services, Australia, Jun 2020](#); cat. no. 6291.0.55.003 [Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, Quarterly, May 2020](#); cat. no. 5625 [Private New Capital Expenditure and Expected Expenditure, Australia, Mar 2020](#).

² Deloitte Access Economics, [Mining and METS: engines of economic growth and prosperity for Australians](#), 29 March 2017.

³ P Tulp, [The effect of the mining boom on the Australian economy](#), RBA Quarterly Bulletin, Sydney, December, 2014.

⁴ Deloitte Access Economics, [Estimates of royalties and company tax accrued in 2017-18](#), report prepared for the Minerals Council of Australia, MCA, 26 March 2019.

Modern mining environmental practice is highly regulated, better implemented and more accountable than ever before. The minerals industry upholds high standards of environmental protection based on the use of sound science and robust risk-based approaches.

The industry pursues continuous improvement in the areas of land use and mine rehabilitation, water use and biodiversity conservation. Companies may also offset significant residual environmental impacts and undertake voluntary conservation initiatives that go beyond regulatory compliance.

The minerals industry approach to community engagement has evolved over past decades. The sector has developed innovative approaches to engagement and is supporting multi-party dialogues and partnerships with local communities – particularly in regional Australia. The industry is increasingly focused on long-term community partnerships and strategic investment to support community priorities and aspirations for sustainable long-term development outcomes.

2. ENHANCING AND ADAPTING MINERALS WORKFORCE SKILLS

- The workplace challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic has placed pressure on mining workers' relationships and mental health. The MCA encourages the Australian Government to extend funding to crucial initiatives that promote mental health and wellbeing, including MATES in Mining.
- The success of Australia's resources sector depends on a highly skilled, highly paid workforce that covers a range of scientific fields, professional occupations and trades. An industry-led education and training system has the potential to enhance and redesign mining jobs and secure the workforce of the future. The Australian Government should continue to refocus skills curricula to meet future technology needs along the full mining and mining equipment, technology and services value chain.
- The minerals industry will accelerate 1,000 new apprenticeships through the Mining Skills Organisation Pilot, in partnership with the Australian government and in cooperation with the states and the Northern Territory. The government's decision to extend funding of the pilot to 30 June 2023 is a positive development.

Supporting workers' mental health during COVID-19

The mining industry recognises that the COVID-19 pandemic, which has required companies to relocate employees, minimise the number of workers on site and institute longer shift cycles, has placed pressure on workers' relationships and mental health.

This reinforces the importance of existing industry initiatives to preserve mental health, including the MCA's leading [Blueprint for Mental Health and Wellbeing Industry guide](#) and MATES in Mining, an independent charity that offers help to workers who can be reluctant to seek it.

The MCA makes significant financial and in-kind contributions to MATES in Mining, which is also supported by site-specific company funding. The MCA encourages the Australian Government to extend funding to crucial initiatives that promote mental health and wellbeing, including MATES in Mining.

Australian mining requires a highly skilled workforce

For many years the Australian mining industry has been a global leader in the development and deployment of new technology and techniques, including data analytics, automation, robotics and artificial intelligence. This leadership will continue in the post-pandemic era.

Mining's large export income (\$289 billion in 2019) was achieved by an operational workforce of 240,000, about 2 per cent of Australia's total workforce. Two-thirds of these jobs are located in regional and remote Australia and form part of the wider 1.1 million jobs (10 per cent of Australia's total workforce) supported in conjunction with the METS sector.⁵

While the mix of locations where employees live, work and study will shift, the significant regional contribution will continue. This will include mining's ongoing role in driving broader economy opportunities through skills development.

In the past, workers might embark on a specific career, acquiring their expertise either from higher education or the vocational stream. In the future, workers will have a mix of skills acquired at different types of educational institutions throughout their life.

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics, cat. no. 5368 [International Trade in Goods and Services, Australia, Jun 2020](#); cat. no. 6291.0.55.003 [Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, Quarterly, May 2020](#); Deloitte Access Economics, [Mining and METS: engines of economic growth and prosperity for Australians](#), 29 March 2017.

Increasingly, mining workplaces will see workers operating in dynamic teams which often come together for tasks and use different mixes of skills – technical and social – and experience to get the best out of the operation. These skills are already being developed and implemented as a COVID-19 response.

Industry-led education and training is essential

The nation's pressing economic challenge is creating the education and training framework that maintains Australia's competitive advantage and the minerals industry's contribution to prosperity.

Through the Mining Skills Organisation Pilot, the MCA together with the Australian Government and state governments, is ready to work with the broader industry in preparing the current and future workforce in innovative and response ways – including retraining and reskilling Australians whose employment has been affected by COVID-19. In the Australian Government's July 2020 Economic and Fiscal Update delivered 23 July 2020 the government announced funding to accelerate the implementation of Vocational Education and Training (VET) Reform Roadmap and to progress implementation of the Skills Organisation model, including the government's intention to provide funding to extend the Mining Skills Organisation Pilot until 30 June 2023

This will include a refocus of skills curricula to meet future technology needs along the full mining and METS value chain. The minerals industry will accelerate 1,000 new apprenticeships through the Mining Skills Organisation Pilot, in partnership with the Australian Government and in cooperation with the states and the Northern Territory.

New and innovative skill sets and qualifications linked to technology adoption in the modern mining sector (such as automation and data analytics) will be fast-tracked through the Mining Skills Organisation Pilot and designed to be transferable to the METS and allied sectors.

In addition, the education pilot programs of the Minerals Tertiary Education Council will further contribute to professional skills development. These pilot programs include:

- A curricula pilot by Central Queensland University and the University of Southern Queensland to refresh and refocus the Associate Degree of Engineering to provide a pathway to a professional engineering career for trade qualified paraprofessionals in engineering related industries
- A review of the undergraduate mining engineering curriculum at Curtin University through extensive consultation with industry and community partners
- A microcredential package from Curtin University and the University of Queensland that offers an online professional certificate in foundations of modern mining for participants from other related disciplines who wish to gain mining specific skills.

3. JOB CREATION THROUGH INVESTMENT IN NEW AND EXPANDED MINERALS PROJECTS

- Additional and ongoing investment is essential to long-term growth in employment and wages in the mining industry.
- Exploration is the foundation of future mining investment. The Australian Government should encourage exploration for strategically important minerals in priority greenfield areas by:
 - Collaborating with states to expand funding for greenfield exploration incentive schemes and prioritise applications for drilling programs in the areas surveyed as part of *Exploring for the Future*
 - Prioritising recipients of tax credits under Junior Minerals Exploration Incentive Scheme to companies exploring in areas surveyed as part of *Exploring for the Future*
 - Providing additional funding to the *Exploring for the Future* program to scope and develop a single national geological database.
- The Australian Government should encourage investment in new and expanded minerals projects and mining equipment, technology and services activities by:
 - Maintaining stable settings for minerals taxation and considering ways of making Australia's business tax system more efficient and internationally competitive
 - Reforming workplace relations to create and sustain jobs in the mining industry and regional Australia
 - Continuing to help expand Australia's markets and encouraging international investment
 - Supporting the acceleration of technological innovation in mining, mining equipment, technology and services and low emissions energy.
 - Amending the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility from a lender of last resort to allow greater flexibility for project loans where a market failure can be identified.

The mining industry and its supply chains in the METS sector are large employers – particularly in regional Australia. The investment phase of the mining boom previously delivered a substantial increase in jobs with the direct mining workforce growing from 160,000 people in 2009 to 240,000 in 2019.⁶

To ensure more job opportunities are created greater investment is needed to open new mines and expand existing operations. Australia cannot rely on the size and quality of its minerals endowment to attract the investment that is needed. New mining regions are emerging around the world that offer comparable mineral quality and can be developed with better commercial returns.

The Reserve Bank of Australia has estimated that around \$100 billion will need to be spent on sustaining capex for coal, iron ore and LNG over the five years from 2018⁷. Sustaining capex is investment to maintain the existing stock of production, sustain jobs particularly in regional areas and supporting economic activity.

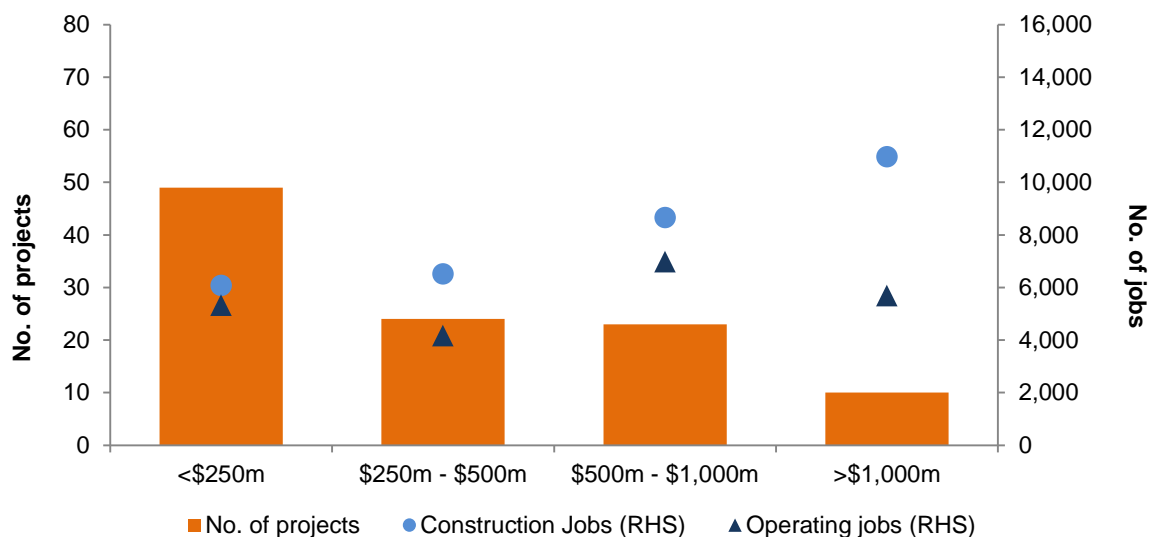
As shown in Chart 1 (next page), Australia already has over 106 mining projects that have completed feasibility studies. The combined \$50 billion investment associated with these projects could create over 32,000 construction jobs and 22,000 ongoing operating jobs across Australia.

⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics, cat. no. 6291.0.55.003 [Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, Quarterly, May 2020](#).

⁷ Reserve Bank of Australia, '[Mining Investment Beyond the Boom](#)', *Bulletin* – March 2018, p10.

Market conditions will ultimately determine how many of these opportunities progress to become operational mines; however, government policy reforms in key areas will improve the prospects of many of these projects and help create more high-paid jobs across the mining and METS sector.

Chart 1: Australian mining projects with a completed scoping or feasibility study



Source: MCA analysis of company reports.

Government investment in exploration

In the last decade, Australian companies have invested nearly \$24 billion on exploration. Exploration is the mining equivalent of research and development. While it can provide an avenue to new business opportunities, there is no guarantee of success.

The Australian Government's recent extension of Geoscience Australia's *Exploring for the Future* program with funding of \$125 million over four years is a welcome commitment to supporting exploration in new greenfield regions.

Exploring for the Future has been highly successful in collecting precompetitive geophysical data for use by researchers, explorers and mining companies while attracting new exploration investment and jobs amidst growing international competition from emerging mining regions. In addition, continuing the successful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community outreach component of *Exploring for the Future* would enhance understanding and support for precompetitive exploration.

Governments, as the stewards of Australia's mineral wealth, must do more to stimulate private exploration investment. Despite decades of exploration, Australia still remains under-explored, particularly at greater depths. Both federal and state governments should invest more in precompetitive geoscientific data to better identify the nation's mineral potential.

To maximise the private sector exploration investment arising from this precompetitive data the government should collaborate with states to expand funding for greenfield exploration incentive schemes and prioritise applications for drilling programs in the areas surveyed as part of *Exploring for the Future*. The government should also consider prioritising exploration activities in these areas for tax credits under the Junior Minerals Exploration Incentive Scheme.

Exploration incentive programs deliver significant benefits. Independent reviews of government incentive programs in Western Australia and South Australia show that every \$1 million of program investment attracts \$20 million of private sector exploration expenditure.⁸

Australian states consistently rate highly in the Fraser Institute's annual *Survey of Mining Companies* for the quality of their geological databases. To retain this source of competitive advantage it would be beneficial to rationalise the different information systems used by each state into a single geological database. This would facilitate the application of advanced analytical methods for identifying new exploration targets, improve exploration success rates and attract greater job-creating investment in Australia.

The government could consider providing additional funding to the *Exploring for the Future* program to scope and develop this database.

Improving the competitiveness of Australia's tax system will stimulate investment and jobs

The tax regime that applies to the Australian mining industry ensures that the community obtains a substantial and appropriate share of the benefits of developing mineral resources. Deloitte Access Economics estimates that the Australian minerals industry paid \$39.3 billion in company tax and royalties in 2018-19, an increase of \$8 billion from 2017-18. It is estimated that over the last 14 years, the minerals industry paid \$281 billion in royalties and company tax – enough to build 11,000 schools or 390 hospitals.⁹

The minerals industry accounted for approximately 30 per cent of all company tax in 2018-19. The payment of consistently high company tax and royalty receipts throughout the business cycle demonstrates the reliability of the minerals industry's contribution.

Along with tax reports from a number of MCA member companies, the work by Deloitte Access Economics also highlights that the minerals sector reports its contributions regularly and transparently to show Australians that the industry can be trusted to pay its fair share of tax and royalties. At the same time the Productivity Commission has affirmed that government assistance to the industry is 'disproportionately small'.¹⁰

Australia has the second highest company income tax rate among OECD countries. Canada, a major mining based country has a company tax rate 4 percentage points lower than Australia. In addition, Canada recently introduced accelerated depreciation write off in response to the USA company tax rate reduction and accelerated write off rules. Australia has not made any changes to make the large business tax burden more internationally competitive since the start of the century.

To stimulate new job-creating investment in mining – and therefore tax revenue – Australia needs a more competitive tax system through reducing the rate of company tax and considering accelerated depreciation, which would reduce the effective company tax rate for capital-intensive industries and encourage new investment.

It is important that limited exclusions from accelerated depreciation continue to apply (notably only passenger motor vehicles and office buildings) and that it be consistent with current depreciation tax treatment, which would reduce complexity and compliance costs.

Workplace relations reform will help create and sustain jobs

The COVID-19 pandemic is focusing governments, employers, workers and their representatives on the policies and actions required to preserve lives and livelihoods. And in preparation for Australia's emergence from the COVID-19 pandemic, a more efficient and effective regulatory system – including

⁸ ACIL Allen Consulting 2015, [Exploration Incentive Scheme Economic Impact Study](#); Geological Survey of Western Australia; Government of South Australia, [PACE 2004-13: evaluation](#), Department for Energy and Mining website, viewed 14 April 2020.

⁹ Deloitte Access Economics, *Estimates of royalties and company tax accrued in 2018-19*, report prepared for Minerals Council of Australia.

¹⁰ Productivity Commission, [Trade and Assistance Review 2018-19](#), Canberra, 29 April 2020.

for workplace relations – will strengthen the minerals industry’s ability to provide highly skilled, highly paid jobs and help the long-term recovery of Australia’s economy and society.

The preservation and expansion of high-wage jobs in the private sector ultimately depends on high-productivity workplaces. Even before the emergence of COVID-19, Australia’s annual rate of economic growth was falling, with growth in both labour productivity and multifactor productivity (which accounts for technological change) declining over the last decade and decreasing in absolute terms in 2018-19.¹¹

As a result, wages growth in Australia has also slowed significantly. The Productivity Commission has noted that more than half of the wages slowdown between 2012-13 and 2017-18 can be attributed to slower labour productivity growth. The commission added that the movement of workers into highly productive mining activities helped to make the labour productivity slowdown in Australia less severe than in other countries.¹²

Making improvements to workplace relations rules will be important to attracting new investment and boosting productivity, employment and wages in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis. The MCA supports the Attorney-General’s working group process and is participating in the greenfields agreement stream. The MCA is continuing to advocate its fundamental position on greenfields reform, namely that allowing the parties to a greenfields agreement to determine its scope and duration will encourage investment in new mining projects, and therefore additional construction and operational jobs (chart 1).¹³

Many enterprise agreements in the minerals industry contain historic clauses that hinder workplace productivity and innovation. Employers who have successfully applied to terminate enterprise agreements have done so largely to remove outdated, irrelevant and restrictive clauses. However, employers cannot easily terminate an expired enterprise agreement because:

- The Fair Work Commission must be satisfied that termination would be appropriate for all parties and not contrary to the public interest
- Contested terminations entail an extensive and expensive legal process
- Successful applications to terminate have generally required undertakings from the employer that preserve many pre-termination terms and conditions.

The ‘evergreen’ nature of enterprise agreements also allows unions who are party to a number of single-enterprise agreements with the same employer to wait until all those agreements expire and coordinate protected industrial action. Protected industrial action that is conducted across enterprises can be used to prosecute objectives that do not relate to the particular agreements themselves, thus undermining the productivity and income benefits of enterprise-level bargaining.¹⁴

The Fair Work Act expanded the range of permitted content in enterprise agreements from ‘matters relating to’ the employment relationship to ‘matters pertaining to’ the employment relationship – including matters pertaining to employers and trade unions. Consequently, more content must be bargained over, more issues can form the basis of protected industrial action, and more content is then able to be included in enterprise agreements which may then be subject to dispute resolution procedures under those agreements.

¹¹ Productivity Commission, [PC Productivity Insights: Recent Productivity Trends](#), 17 February 2020, pp. 12, 15.

¹² *ibid.*, pp. 18f, 25.

¹³ See Minerals Council of Australia, [Submission on Attorney-General’s discussion paper on project life greenfields agreements](#), 1 November 2019, MCA, Canberra.

¹⁴ See Glencore, [Submission to the Productivity Commission: Australian Workplace Relations Framework](#), March 2015, p. 14.

In the minerals industry, it is not uncommon to see clauses in enterprise agreements that restrict the fundamental right of an employer to manage its own business, or which have little to do with the employer-employee relationship. For example, these clauses can require employers to:

- Consult with unions on changes to regular rosters or ordinary hours of work
- Restrict retrenchment to a 'last-in, first-out' policy
- Restrict or prohibit the use of contractors or labour hire workers
- Provide employee representatives with the names and commencement dates of new employees
- Provide paid leave for employees to attend to union business.

Consistent with the Productivity Commission, the MCA supports removing the availability of protected industrial action for matters not directly related to the employment relationship.¹⁵ This would improve workplace efficiency by ensuring that:

- Negotiations are not stifled by claims that constrain an employer's ability to manage the workforce and work flow
- The bargaining process has a clear employment focus and protected industrial action cannot be misused for ulterior purposes.

Operational flexibility is crucial for mining because it is a price-taker on global markets and experiences larger swings in production and revenue than other major industries. Labour hire and service contracting are important to the efficiency and competitiveness of mining operations and should not be subject to blunt legislative restrictions, such as 'jump-up' clauses that require businesses to engage labour hire workers or contractors on the same terms as employees, or that limit access to these arrangements.¹⁶

A survey of MCA members by Deloitte Access Economics revealed that labour hire workers (who may be permanent or casual) account for 11 per cent of the total minerals industry workforce, with 70 per cent living outside metropolitan areas.¹⁷ This is consistent with the latest ABS figure for the broader resources sector (10 per cent).¹⁸

In addition, Deloitte Access Economics found that the three most important motivations for using labour hire workers and service contractors were:

- Maintaining operational flexibility
- Securing specialised skills, including planned maintenance shutdowns, specialised construction and high-quality rehabilitation
- Responding to upswings in commodity prices.¹⁹

Similarly, service contractors offer flexibility – and enhance productivity – by providing labour, plant and equipment, safety systems and expertise. Provision of these inputs can enable new entrants to the mining industry to secure investment finance.

Every employee, business and industry cannot and should not be expected to flourish under the same workplace rules. Australia's move away from centralised wage fixation 30 years' ago – and the subsequent availability of individual agreements – recognised the increasingly diverse requirements

¹⁵ Cf. the Productivity Commission, [Workplace Relations Framework: Inquiry Report, Volume 2](#), Canberra, 21 December 2015, pp. 683, 820.

¹⁶ See the Productivity Commission, [Workplace Relations Framework: Final Report, Volume 1](#), Canberra, 21 December 2015, p. 37.

¹⁷ Deloitte Access Economics, [Economic effects of changes to labour hire laws](#), report prepared for the Minerals Council of Australia, MCA, 4 June 2019, p. vi.

¹⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics, [Characteristics of Employment, Australia, Aug 2016](#), ABS cat. no. 6333.0, released 2 May 2017.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 40.

of modern workforces. The MCA submits that workers earning above the high-income threshold for unfair dismissals (currently \$148,700) should be permitted to opt out of an enterprise agreement and enter into individual agreements.

International trade and investment are vital to economic recovery and job creation

Australia's openness to trade and investment underpins its prosperity. One in five Australian jobs are trade-related and exporting firms generally employ more people and pay higher wages than firms that focus on domestic markets.²⁰

The government should continue to support trade agreements (multilateral and bilateral) that expand Australia's export markets and refine policies and processes to encourage inward international investment. To be effective, trade agreements must be supported by a global rules-based order underpinned by multilateral trade rules and dispute resolution mechanisms.

Australia is usually a net importer of capital, requiring international investment to fill the gap between domestic saving and investment. This capital shortfall has been on average about 4 per cent of GDP over the last decade.²¹ Without international investment, Australia would need to take on additional debt or forgo inflows of finance and technology.

International investment has long provided the capital that helps make Australia a global minerals powerhouse. The value of foreign direct investment in Australia's resources sector increased nearly ten-fold between 2001 and 2018, from \$36.8 billion to \$365.5 billion.²² However, in recent years the processes for screening and approving foreign investment have become duplicative and less clear.

In particular, the approach to screening and foreign investment assessment processes by the Foreign Investment Review Board and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's tests for mergers and acquisitions has had the unintended consequence of generating complexity, confusion and uncertainty for international parties seeking to invest in Australia.

While sovereign governments cannot reasonably be expected to guarantee that certain foreign investments will proceed, they can ensure that the screening and approvals process is consistent and timely.

The Treasurer announced on 30 March that for the duration of the COVID-19 crisis all proposed foreign investments into Australia will require approval by the Foreign Investment Review Board, regardless of their monetary value or the nature of the foreign investor.

As part of the restoration of routine regulatory settings for the Foreign Investment Review Board, the government should consider implementing a timely and efficient process for assessing international investments into Australia against a clear set of national interest criteria that balances the government's objectives of attracting international capital, expanding local projects and operations and protecting sovereignty and national security.

Supporting technological innovation will secure long-term opportunities in mining and METS

Australia's resources sector is a global innovation leader and one of the most productive industries in the world, according to the Productivity Commission.²³ Innovation enables mining companies to extract and process ores at a competitive cost and to extract deposits that are deeper or more remote. Innovation also supports improved safety, social and environmental outcomes by allowing impacts to be eliminated, better mitigated or managed.

²⁰ Commonwealth of Australia, [2017 Foreign Policy White Paper](#), p. 14.

²¹ Adam McKissack and Jessica Xu, [Foreign investment into Australia](#), Treasury Working Paper, January 2016.

²² Australian Bureau of Statistics, [International Investment Position, Australia: Supplementary Statistics, 2018](#), ABS cat. no. 5352.0 released 8 May 2019.

²³ Productivity Commission, [Shifting the Dial: 5 Year Productivity Review: Supporting Paper No. 1: Productivity and Income – The Australian Story](#), Canberra, 3 August 2017, released on 24 October 2017, pp. 24, 26.

The Australian resources sector has also been an incubator of globally competitive industrial and technological innovations that have enabled tens of thousands of Australian businesses to grow and trade a diverse range of goods and services domestically and internationally.

Of the 1.1 million jobs directly and indirectly supported by mining and the minerals equipment, technology and services sector, 850,000 can be found in the diversity of businesses that have harnessed the skills and technologies in manufacturing, defence industries, automation, robotics, artificial intelligence, data analysis and communications.

The success of the METS sector proves that manufacturing in Australia can and should be efficient, commercially competitive and technologically advanced. The METS sector should be fully integrated into manufacturing industry policy, programs and related plans and funding for manufacturing technology and innovation.

The government should continue support for bodies that enhance collaboration between the mining and METS sector and research organisations.

The government should also consider expanding emission reduction support to a technology neutral platform that will to accelerate Australia's transformation to a low-carbon economy more efficiently and effectively.

This includes support for public-private minerals and resources research vehicles in low emissions technology projects such as the Carbon Transport & Storage Company's (CTSCo) Queensland project. CTSCo has the potential to unlock Australia's first carbon hub, allowing the central storage of CO₂ from multiple sites and activities including power generation, gas production, ammonia and hydrogen.

To ensure a technology neutral approach, the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC) should be allowed to invest in carbon capture and storage (CCS). Similarly, the remit for the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) should be expanded to support clean energy and hydrogen production from Australia's minerals resources and on-site energy sources such as bioenergy coupled with carbon capture and storage CCS.

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy inquiry into prerequisites for nuclear energy in Australia (which reported in December 2019) provides a series of sensible recommendations which the government should adopt as steps towards removing the discriminatory ban on nuclear energy.

Focused on developing greater understanding of the prospects for advanced nuclear technologies in Australia, the inquiry's recommendations address the sensitivities involved in the nuclear energy debate, and provide a way forward for nuclear energy to be considered in the Australian context.

By seeking to improve understanding of advanced technologies like small modular reactors, the government would send an important signal about developing a genuinely technology neutral energy policy which can meet the needs of Australian industry and households while also reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This would attract significant attention from international advanced nuclear technology providers.

Investment in minerals processing

Australia has built its mining industry on a reputation for smart, sophisticated, sustainable exploration, mining and minerals processing – from bulk commodities like iron ore, coal and bauxite to metals like gold, copper and nickel and increasingly critical metals like lithium.

Critical minerals are already a multi-billion dollar industry in Australia, with many new projects at advanced stages of development that will soon be ready to support the world's growing needs. For example, Australia the largest lithium producer in the world and is already starting to attract investment in downstream processing.

The availability of internationally competitive and reliable energy supplies is important to sustaining and growing the Australian minerals processing sector. This needs to be developed in conjunction with Australia's commitments under the Paris Agreement, and in the context of any further Australian decarbonising objectives beyond 2030. The creation of a genuinely technology-neutral energy policy embracing renewables, hydrogen, coal and gas with carbon capture and storage, advanced nuclear technologies and energy efficiency along with digitisation, automation and electrification will be critical.

The Australian Government established the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility (NAIF) to boost economic and population growth in Northern Australia. The objective of the NAIF is 'to provide grants of financial assistance to the States and Territories for the construction of Northern Australia economic infrastructure'.

To encourage greater take-up of projects, including in minerals processing, the government should consider amending the NAIF from a lender of last resort to allowing greater flexibility for project loans where a market failure can be identified.

4. REDUCING REGULATORY DELAYS TO INVESTMENT

- Regulatory inefficiency and delays discourage investment, impede job creation, increase costs to business and prevent the full benefits of mining flowing to regional communities and the Australian economy.
- Effective implementation of national cabinet's 'single touch' environmental approvals process will help address regulatory inefficiencies, reduce delays, bringing forward jobs and investment.
- Reforms are also needed to support development in those jurisdictions where a single touch process is not yet been established. These include the coordination of federal/state processes, risk-based assessment and approvals and a range of other legislative, policy administrative improvements.

The independent review of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) gives government an important reform opportunity for a better environment, more jobs and faster economic recovery.

Australia's world-leading minerals sector is committed to the protection of the country's unique environment, including upholding leading practice environmental protection based on sound science and robust risk-based approaches.

Reforms to the operation of the EPBC Act are needed to address unnecessary duplication and complexity identified in the independent review interim report. Reforms should provide greater certainty for businesses and the community while achieving sound environmental outcomes.

The interim report of the Independent review of the EPBC Act provides a range of 'reform directions', many of which if implemented would support a more efficient and effective EPBC Act.²⁴

The MCA supports the Australian Government and national cabinet commitment to establish a 'single touch' approvals process – based on the national standards and the devolution of approvals to states and territories under bilateral agreements – will help address regulatory inefficiencies, reduce delays and provide greater certainty for business to invest.²⁵

These reforms will facilitate an earlier start to projects and bring forward jobs in regional and source communities and support businesses across the minerals industry supply chain.

Integration of Commonwealth and state/territory regulation

The independent review has recognised the overlap and between Commonwealth and state/territory processes. Different triggers, timeframes, reviews, requests for further information and a lack of efficient inter-agency coordination create unnecessary complexity, costs and delays.

The MCA supports the interim report recommendation to establish national outcomes-based standards under the EPBC Act and devolution of Commonwealth environmental assessment and approvals requirements to the states and territories. The MCA also supports the commitment of national cabinet to progress bilateral agreements between the Commonwealth and all states and territories that would enable this devolution.

The MCA recommends the national standards and regulatory architecture to support these agreements be carefully developed to ensure they can be practically applied. Consideration should also be given to transitional arrangements for existing projects and for projects in jurisdictions where a bilateral agreement is yet to be established.

²⁴ Samuel G, [Independent Review of the EPBC Act – Interim Report](#), Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, Canberra, June 2020

²⁵ Prime Minister Scott Morrison, [Media Statement](#), 24 July 2020

Other critical reforms

Other reforms in the EPBC Act review interim report should also be progressed. These will support development in those jurisdictions where a bilateral agreement is yet to be established:

- Coordination of Commonwealth/state processes - through joint scoping of environmental assessments, including requirements, timelines and assigning assessment tasks to regulators with relevant expertise
- Risk-based approach to environmental impact assessment (EIA) and approvals – this will ensure time and resources are dedicated to matters with the greatest bearing on proposed mining activity, avoiding unnecessarily complex assessment and delays, including:
 - The EIA should be preceded by a comprehensive, risk-based scoping stage to map and lock in exact information requirements and acceptable methodologies. Follow-up engagement between proponents and regulators can avoid reassessment and moving the goal posts for the assessment.
 - Assessment pathways, including referrals, for EIA processes should be risk-based, providing simpler rapid pathways for low risk and well-understood activities and environments (e.g. brownfield developments). Existing rapid decision-making mechanisms (e.g. particular manner provisions) should be fully used.
 - Approval conditions should be risk-based and outcomes focused, with model conditions for low risk or well understood activities/environments and tailored conditions for complex or site-specific risks, or where the understanding of the impacts/environment is low. Consistency between Commonwealth and state/territory and conditions is critical.
 - A simple risk-based process to consider and vary an approval should be established, avoiding the need for referral and full assessment where changes are not material to the environmental outcome (including minor or administrative changes).
- Limiting the scope and capture of the water and nuclear actions trigger to avoid duplication of state based requirements and the capture of non-radiological risks
- Greater certainty in post-approval processes - matters considered in the post-approval stage (e.g. through management plans) can be critical to the timely start of minerals projects. An option should be provided to consider post-approval matters in the primary approval stage wherever practical. Clear timeframes for post-approval matters should be agreed to at the outset supported by enhanced regulator accountability to meet these timeframes.

Integrated and more flexible environmental offsets

Uncertainty in the application of the EPBC environmental offsets policy is a major cause of delay. Improved guidance in the implementation of the policy would enable greater consistency in regulator decision making, bringing forward these decisions into the primary approval phase.

There should be mutual recognition between Commonwealth and state/territory offsets wherever practical, consolidated into a single requirement for proponents.

A financial-based mechanism (e.g. a trust fund) for environmental offsets should be established under the EPBC Act to prioritise and contribute to strategic environmental outcomes.

Enhancing regulator service delivery

Effective service delivery is critical to timely approvals. Continued appropriate resourcing and investment in supporting systems will be important to enhance regulator performance.

The capacity of regulators should be bolstered by industry-specific training, site visits and hiring experts with industry experience to address the backlog of existing projects and ensure timely future

assessments. This should be supported by the development of improved policy and guidance to support clear, consistent and accountable decision-making.

Regulator accountability should be further enhanced by embedding timely and effective service delivery in key performance indicators.

Reforms to state and territory regulation

The Productivity Commission inquiry into resource sector regulation has identified state and territory processes as a significant factor in the unnecessary delay of minerals development. The draft finding that greater cooperation, coordination and concurrence of processes across different agencies and assessment bodies is required (e.g. through lead agencies) provides timely reinforcement about the need for state level action to complement national reforms.

The MCA recommends the Australian Government work with national cabinet to prioritise and implement key reforms to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of state and territory regulation.

5. ENHANCING PARTNERSHIPS WITH INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS

- The minerals industry is committed to working alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in a way that supports cultural, economic and social aspirations and priorities. The industry is a proud major customer of the Indigenous business sector.
- The Australian Government could support strong partnerships and economic outcomes by:
 - Extending and accelerating the Australian Government's Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBC) capacity-building program to ensure Traditional Owners can realise the full economic development opportunities arising from native title, including tailored training, services and expertise. The option of a new simplified economic vehicle for PBCs, known as the PBC Economic Vehicle Status to undertake economic development activities should also be pursued
 - Improving the stability and efficiency of the native title system by legislating long-standing and broadly-supported measures
 - Continuing community engagement activities during government funded pre-competitive exploration programs such as Geoscience Australia's *Exploring for the Future*.
- In mid-2019, the MCA initiated an Industry and Indigenous Partnerships Community of Practice pilot with the National Native Title Council to share leading practice implementation strategies, resources and research. The MCA recommends the Department of Industry, Science, Resources and Energy provides modest funding and formally support whole-of-government engagement in the community of practice initiative.

A long-term commitment to partnerships with Indigenous Australians

Economic, social, cultural and spiritual strength for current and future generations are priorities for Indigenous Australians. The industry has supported these aspirations through industry land use agreements, engagements and partnerships for more than two decades.

More than 6,600 Indigenous Australians, mostly in remote and regional areas, are now directly employed in the minerals industry.²⁶ The industry is a major customer of the Indigenous business sector. Income from mining agreements and related commitments also supports social and physical infrastructure and a range of locally-led health initiatives in partner communities.

As part of the support for diverse and vibrant Aboriginal and Torres Strait businesses, the MCA supports the Australian Government's tailored support to assist the Indigenous business sector to maintain and build on recent gains in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Engaging major customers, such as the mining industry, in development and implementation of initiatives may assist to maximise outcomes.

Foundations for success

Tailored support for Prescribed Body Corporates

Registered Native Title Body Corporates (Prescribed Body Corporates – PBCs) are a key industry interface as these specialist corporations manage native title rights and interests on behalf of landholders.²⁷ The MCA continues its long-standing support for PBCs to receive sufficient and stable funding and assistance to undertake statutory duties and support local economic aspirations.

The Australian Government's PBC Capacity Building Program should be extended and accelerated through investment in staff development and the provision of specialist advice and services. This

²⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics, [2016 Census – Employment, Income and Education, Indigenous Status \(INGP\) by industry of employment \(INDP\)](#).

²⁷ Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, [PBC national snapshot](#), ATSIIS, viewed 19 August 2020.

would also assist PBCs to capitalise on reforms to the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* (CATSI Act) arising from the current review.

A stable and efficient native title system

Native title is recognised over much of the land on which the minerals industry operates. A stable, efficient and practical native title regime establishes clear, predictable and equitable processes for land users.

The Native Title Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 [Provisions] brings together a package of long-standing technical and administrative improvements to improve operation of the Native Title Act. The MCA generally supports the bill.

The MCA encourages the Commonwealth to continue to work with Western Australian Government on complementary legislation addressing uncertainty created by 2017 Forrest & Forrest High Court. The High Court's decision that a mineralisation report must be lodged at the same time as an application for a mining lease in order for that to be a valid application creates uncertainty for investment and shared benefits from resulting mining activity progressed in good faith.

Engagement during pre-competitive geoscience activities

Geoscience Australia's Traditional Owner outreach activities for its *Exploring for the Future* program build understanding and confidence in geoscience data and act support positive landholder and community relationships with the minerals sector. The MCA recommends these activities continue.

Supporting strong relationships and outcomes

The implementation of land use agreements and partnerships is an intensive and ongoing process. In mid-2019, the MCA initiated an Industry and Indigenous Partnerships Community of Practice pilot with the National Native Title Council to share leading practice implementation strategies, resources and research. Outcomes during its first year include the Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining's world-first practitioner e-library, monthly webinars and stronger multi-sector connections.

The MCA recommends the Department of Industry, Science, Resources and Energy provides modest funding and formally support whole-of-government engagement in the community of practice initiative.

Maximising long-term economic outcomes

The National Native Title Council's proposed PBC - Economic Vehicle Status (EVS) model aims to provide a simple mechanism to enable native title monies to be further deployed for long-term economic development activities. The MCA supports the proposal, which would provide an additional and flexible option to manage native title monies arising from land use agreements and partnerships.

The proposed model moves away from any notion that native title monies are welfare payments, and would provide new options for legacy trusts that may no longer be fit-for-purpose.

The current review of the CATSI Act provides an opportunity for the Australian Government to embed the EVS as an option for PBCs. Complementary amendments to state charity laws are also required.

The Australian Government should also invest in accessible resources detailing the range of benefits management structures available to PBCs and other Indigenous organisations.

To assist Indigenous businesses recover from the COVID-19 crisis the government should continue its Indigenous business support program with modifications to support the emerging challenges many business now face.