

MINERALS COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA

LAND STEWARDSHIP POLICY

Access to land is fundamental for minerals development. The Australian minerals industry recognises that access to land is earned by demonstrating responsible land stewardship throughout the mining life cycle. While mining is a temporary land use, the minerals industry acknowledges its responsibility to contribute towards sustainable land use outcomes.

Accordingly, the Australian minerals industry has adopted the following vision to deliver sustainable land use outcomes:

Australian mining companies will be recognised as responsible stewards of the land by delivering balanced economic, cultural, social and environmental outcomes throughout the mining life cycle

The minerals industry can be a significant land manager at a regional level and non-operational land managed by the industry can be significantly larger than the mining footprint. This land may be managed under existing or alternative land uses.

The minerals industry recognises that while some previously mined areas are rehabilitated to pre-existing condition or better, other mined areas result in substantial transformation of the landscape. It is the minerals industry's goal to ensure that this land is available for subsequent economic activities, conservation or community use.

The Minerals Council of Australia advocates the application of the following principles to achieve the minerals industry vision¹:

Land use planning and access

- Sustainable land use outcomes can only be delivered through recognition and integration of the multiple values within the landscape (conservation, economic, social and cultural) with the aim of maximising these values
- Land use planning should be strategic, regionally focussed and facilitate sustainable land use outcomes for the benefit of current and future generations.
- Land use planning should be based on sound science and account for both negative and positive cumulative effects.
- Mining, conservation, agriculture and other land uses can be complementary as sequential or neighbouring activities. The minerals industry endorses the application of leading practice which can enhance the integration and co-existence of these activities.
- The rights, knowledge and interests of traditional owners, existing land holders and the community should be recognised and respected in integrated land use planning processes.
- Mine and exploration planning activities should engage appropriately with stakeholders, including the surrounding community, on an ongoing basis and consider changing circumstances.
- Government planning decisions that impact land access and land use arrangements should be transparent, evidence based, and consider the social, economic, environmental and cultural implications of developing or sterilising mineral resources.

Land use compatibility

- It is recognised that in some cases, mining or exploration activities may not be compatible when balanced with the surrounding values (conservation, economic, social or cultural). Industry recognises that while regulators may make decisions that development may not proceed, these decisions should be founded in a transparent and science based process.

¹ Note: This Land Stewardship Policy should be read in conjunction with the *MCA Biodiversity Offsets Policy*, *MCA Water Policy* and the *ICMM Position Statement on Mining and Protected Areas* (www.minerals.org.au)

- Changes in land use values, mining practices or technology may provide for future compatibility for minerals development. Any restrictions on land access should allow for future re-evaluation.
- Exploration and mining should not be undertaken in World Heritage properties. Mining operations which already exist within World Heritage properties, and existing and future operations adjacent to such areas, should ensure activities do not adversely impact on their listed values.

Land management

- Mining activities will aim to minimise disturbance, and provide for ongoing progressive rehabilitation, directed at achieving an agreed final land use that is both stable and self sustaining.
- The industry will apply the 'avoid-minimise mitigate' approach to managing land values. In some circumstances, offsets may be used to compensate for significant residual loss of these values.
- Both operational and non-operational land should be managed responsibly considering adjacent and future land uses.

Future land use

- The post-mining land use should be considered at the mine design stage and defined through an ongoing consultation process with regulators and relevant stakeholders.
- Closure design should aim to facilitate beneficial post-mining land use, this may include future economic activity, conservation or social use.

October 2012
