



## MCA COVID-19 update

### Stakeholder Update 14 – Working with communities during the COVID-19 pandemic

25 May 2021

#### Maintaining stringent health standards to keep people safe

The minerals industry continues to work alongside communities, governments and other sectors to keep workers and families safe from COVID-19.

The industry's approach involves:

- 1. Staying vigilant:** the MCA National COVID-19 Working Group continues to meet fortnightly to share and discuss new public health advice, strategies and approaches across industry.
- 2. Maintaining stringent standards:** industry continues to implement the National Resources COVID-19 Protocols that establish common, evidence-based health, hygiene and operational controls.
  - The MCA's [supporting guide](#) to assist in implementing protocols relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations has also been updated with case studies and lessons from 2020.
- 3. Supporting the vaccination rollout:** industry continues to share government public health information among its workforce.
  - This includes promoting tailored public health information for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations.
- 4. Demonstrating transparency:** all MCA industry resources are available on its [COVID-19 webpage](#).

#### Other MCA news

##### Learning from tragedy and acting to prevent it happening again

Yesterday marked one year since the tragic destruction of the 46,000 year old caves at Juukan Gorge.

These caves were of immense spiritual and cultural importance to the Puutu Kunti Kurrama People and the Pinikura People, as well as being of great archaeological significance and a part of Australia's shared heritage.

This destruction should never have occurred and must never happen again.

The destruction of the caves at Juukan Gorge and issues which arose subsequently cast a shadow across the minerals industry and had a deep and abiding effect on the industry's relationships with partner First Nations landholders and communities.

Based on the understanding that trust is earned, particularly with its most important stakeholders, the industry has reflected long and hard over the last year on all aspects of its relationships with First Nations landholders and communities.



Industry has heard a clear message: that it must be better at listening, work harder to build and sustain relationships and ensure that First Nations are equal partners based on agreed common priorities.

In addition to company-specific actions, the industry is working together through the MCA to enhance capability, systems and engagement. Industry has also publicly supported modernisation of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage protection laws.

Key actions to date include:

- Establishing a committee of senior industry executives reporting directly to the MCA Board to support industry to improve its capability, systems and engagement
- Preparing for regular and consistent assessment, reporting and verification of site-level performance against defined social, heritage, environment and First Nations partnerships indicators through the Towards Sustainable Mining system adopted earlier this year. Indicators relating to First Nations partnerships and heritage will be adapted for Australia in consultation with Indigenous organisations
- Commencing a review of industry's understanding and application of free, prior and informed consent within the broader framework of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- Continuing to host a collaborative forum to share lessons to enhance processes and outcomes relating to land use agreement implementation
- Contributing to the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* review process, noting the importance of local autonomy to Traditional Owner organisations
- Continuing to advocate for Traditional Owner organisations to receive more government funding and support. The Australian Government's recent allocation of an additional \$36.7 million over four years to support Prescribed Body Corporate Capacity Building is an important step.

In the next 12 months the industry will also:

- Further increase senior industry engagement with First Nations leaders from national organisations and areas that host mining activities
- Review and act on relevant findings by the Joint Standing Committee on Northern Australia inquiry into matters relating to Juukan Gorge
- Finalise adaptation of TSM for Australia, and develop further guidance and education to assist companies to enhance partnerships where needed
- Build on company-specific processes and training to deliver industry cultural heritage protection education and materials
- Undertake a baseline assessment to understand the types of partnerships between mining companies and First Nations landholders and communities



- Support research and materials to understand leading practice partnerships approaches.

#### Other MCA news

Recent MCA news includes:

- Mine medical and emergency response teams tested their rescue skills at the [Northern Australian Emergency Response Competition](#) in Darwin. The MCA hosts the event annually
- The MCA's [campaign](#) showing how the industry is continuing to support small business through the COVID-19 pandemic is being shown nationally until September
- The first-of-a-kind *Indigenous Business Snapshot Study* from the University of Melbourne found the [mining sector](#) has had an important role in supporting the sector's growth over more than a decade.
- The MCA Respect@Work Taskforce is continuing to take action to eliminate workplace sexual harassment. This follows release of the industry [Safe, Healthy and Respectful Workplaces](#) policy in January.

More news is available on the MCA [website](#).

#### Next steps

The 15<sup>th</sup> stakeholder update on industry's response to COVID-19 will be published in July.