

# CRITICAL MINERALS ASSOCIATION AUSTRALIA

## FEBRUARY 2025

- Australia still betting on rare earths
- Future made in Australia production tax credits pass the Senate
- Copper tariffs risk rises as US initiates trade investigation

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February 2025

# MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Welcome to our Critical Minerals Association Australia monthly newsletter & updates on the critical minerals space.

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2025

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Critical Minerals Association Australia



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www.cmaaustralia.org

## Roundtable Dialogues on Indigenous Partnerships in Critical Minerals

CSIRO and i2i Global, in collaboration with Critical Minerals Association Australia are conducting a roundtable series exploring the future of Indigenous partnerships in critical minerals. The roundtable dialogues are part of CSIRO's Valuing Sustainability Future Science Platform Navigating just sustainability transitions in critical minerals project. The objective of the roundtables is to place First Nations views at the centre of Australian critical mineral development, improve understanding and consider actions to advance economic self-determination and inclusive decision-making processes. The roundtables (2 of which are virtual) are planned for 11th March, April and May. Please contact us if you would like to participate.

### Session 1: First Nations Aspirations & Concerns in Critical Minerals

Format: Online Dialogue, March 2025

### Session 2: Rethinking the Proponent-led model of Resource Development – Is there room for innovation?

Format: In-person Dialogue, Brisbane, March/April 2025

### Session 3: Rethinking Risk – Indigenous Partnerships in Mining

Format: Online Dialogue, May 2025

Audience / Participants: Investment analysts with responsibility for mining stocks, investment

bankers, project financiers, executives and Indigenous interests that lead on project development, institutional bankers, Indigenous leaders for economic development.

## CSIRO Innovate to Grow - 8 week Programme for SMEs

CSIRO has just opened its latest Innovate to Grow program for Queensland-based SMEs working on innovative solutions and looking for help with R&D. This Innovate to Grow program is funded by Queensland Government and being delivered as part the Regional University Industry Collaboration (RUIC) Program.

Applications are open until 16 Mar 2025. For more information (including eligibility) and to apply, visit [www.csiro.au/I2Gqld](http://www.csiro.au/I2Gqld)

*This month CMA Australia takes a look at updates from Mining Indaba 2025 held from February 3-6 in Cape Town, South Africa. CMA Member, SRK Consulting and Paydirt Media shared the following overviews with us.*

## **Mining in Africa Must Avoid Distraction From Its Measured Progress** **Andrew van Zyl | Managing Director of South Africa, Principal Consultant** **SRK Consulting | 10 Feb 2025**

Despite the geopolitical uncertainties affecting the global economy, Africa's mining sector remains well placed to expand its economic and social contribution.

Speaking from the Investing in African Mining Indaba in Cape Town, SRK Consulting managing director Andrew van Zyl highlighted the progress being discussed in safe and responsible mining. In a week where much media attention focused on changes to international trade tariffs, the Indaba again drew a large international contingent of mining stakeholders.

"The tone of the Indaba reflects the generally upbeat sentiment in mining today, and reminds us that there is considerable momentum behind moving mining in positive directions," said Van Zyl. "The world's population is still heavily dependent for its daily survival on commodities that have to be mined so it is incumbent on all involved to continuously improve the enterprise of mining."

He noted that, notwithstanding ongoing changes in the macro-economic environment, the responsibilities, risks and aspirations of mines and their local communities remained relatively constant. These include issues related to safety, engagement, water stewardship, tailings management and power supply.

"A critical focus in mining – as the Indaba's 'future-proofing' theme suggests – is to create as much stability and predictability as possible – so that operations can continue to produce safely and cost-effectively," he said. "This in turn helps to streamline and assure the key benefits that arise from mining, such as employment and procurement from the local economy." In a sector that prioritised personal safety, there was considerable innovation underway in many field – even if this was implemented cautiously over time.

"There are plenty of reasons to celebrate the achievements of the mining sector, and the Indaba is an acknowledgement of that," said Van Zyl. "In 2024, for example, South African mining was able to achieve its lowest fatality rate yet."



Speakers at the Indaba from the Mineral Council South Africa hailed the long-term trend in safety performance, while acknowledging that any death was one too many. They also noted that the sector had substantially reduced the incidence of tuberculosis, silicosis and noise induced hearing loss over recent years.

The event also highlighted continued sustainability efforts, with the significant investment in cleaner renewable energy by local mining companies, in the drive to meet decarbonisation targets while both increasing power availability and reducing power costs. An important sustainability step towards the development of renewable diesel was also taken at the Indaba, involving mining companies Anglo American and De Beers, alongside chemical giant Sasol.

He added that the active participation at the Indaba of leading industry bodies like the ICMM shows that African mining is a partner of growing importance in the global drive towards responsible mining. "It is also significant that the ICMM has selected South Africa as the location of the Global Tailings Management Institute – affirming the key role South African engineers have played in the development and implementation of the Global Industry Standard on Tailings Management (GISTM)," he said. "This also highlights that South Africa offers world-class technical solutions at competitive rates."

The mining world descended on Cape Town in February for the annual Investing in African Mining Indaba, the critical minerals was a major theme of the week. Critical minerals is emerging as a crucial opportunity for the continent, with governments across Africa eager to define both their endowment and the opportunities to move beyond raw material production. Paydirt Media Editor Dominic Piper was in Cape Town for the forum and found the challenges and opportunities are still being debated.

Africa's abundance of critical minerals means the continent will play an integral part in the energy transition, but governments must be wary of pushing too hard too early when it comes to downstream opportunities. Africa has long battled to escape the dig-and-ship mentality of its natural resources investors and while the critical minerals sector offers hope that value addition can take place within the continent, experiences around the world suggest it is not simple. At a geopolitical level, China dominates supply chains for almost every critical mineral and is eager to maintain that position. Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump is pushing a new era of protectionism that could fracture supply chains still further.

From a technical viewpoint, even the world's most advanced mining industry, Australia, has struggled to make the leap from raw material extraction to downstream production with several lithium hydroxide plants yet to reach commercial status. Syrah Resources Ltd is one of the most advanced non-Chinese critical minerals manufacturers globally. In the Balama mine in Mozambique, it owns the largest natural graphite project in the world and having built an anode production facility in Louisiana, US, it has become the first fully integrated producer outside China. Syrah could be a model for any critical minerals miner looking to build its business but managing director Shaun Verner said the company's experience was proof just how difficult the journey was.

"We are 10 years into it and just now approaching positive free cashflow," Verner said on a specially convened lithium and graphite panel at Mining Indaba. "It is an incredibly complex process and that technical complexity is the challenge, especially when you combine it with the time it takes and the capex required."

Graphite is not a commodity as we know them. To be successful, you must understand your customer, their requirements and how to meet them. "That qualification process is the biggest challenge. We started the anode plant in 2018 and are just now in the final stages of qualification. Although the advantage is that once you meet those standards and specs, the contracts are large and long."

For African countries, the barriers to downstream production can be even higher given the importance of affordable power, high-quality infrastructure and appropriate labour skills required to compete with China's deep, experienced industry.

Inge Petersen, executive director of the Global Battery Alliance, said even geography placed Africa at a disadvantage. "For downstream to work in battery minerals, you need proximity to battery manufactures and OEMs, for the upstream to work you need proximity to primary source," she explained. "Africa has the primary source but EV demand from Africa is only going to be 0.1% of the global total by 2030." Verner said Syrah's experience bore this out, with customer expectations that anode production would take place in North America.

"It is primarily driven by customer requirements to have the product close to them and infrastructure, cost, etc," he said. "We would love to produce anode material in Mozambique, but have challenges around power, infrastructure and cost which mean it is not viable at the moment."

"Getting high-quality feedstock and product into our US facility and that market will allow us to gradually move each step back up towards Mozambique. But if we push too hard, too early, we end up with a long, complex life cycle and that puts the entire project at risk."

French energy company Eramet is branching out into critical minerals with development of its first lithium operation in Argentina. Chief development officer Geoff Streeton said the company saw a bright future for African critical minerals development, but governments would need to ensure the right settings to enable success.

"In Africa, there are numerous high-quality hard rock projects but the challenge in the right structural elements to be competitive on a global scale," he said. "Countries need to find a point of difference because hard rock projects all tend to be of a similar grade. Therefore, fiscal terms, logistics, cost of labour and energy, favourable permitting regime; they are all crucial if a project is to be brought onstream."

Absa Bank's managing principal of resources and energy Shirley Webber said it was crucial governments understood the requirements for a successful resources industry.

"We firmly believe benefits should be in-country, even if it is only the first step of beneficiation," she said. "But each and every African country needs to put clarity around the rules and regulations and try to create an investor-friendly country to get investor confidence up."



# AUSTRALIAN NEWS

## BHP awards Olympic Dam expansion contract

BHP has awarded a contract worth approximately \$40 million to support the proposed expansion of its Olympic Dam copper smelter and refinery facilities in South Australia...

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Australian Mining | 3 Feb 2025

Photo source: [Australian Mining](#)



## Australia still betting on rare earths

The Albanese government hoped for a new resources boom in new critical minerals projects and processing. There's been a hard reckoning since, but the dream still lives for Iluka Resources and others...

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Financial Review (Subscription Required) | 19 Feb 2025

## New projects will be a stable source of critical minerals for Australia

Nico Resources' Wingellina Nickel-Cobalt Project will see the development of one of the largest deposits of nickel-cobalt in Australia and the world. The development of Wingellina will provide a long-term supply of nickel, a critical mineral used to manufacture lithium-ion batteries for electric vehicles and energy storage units...

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Australian Government | 5 Feb 2025

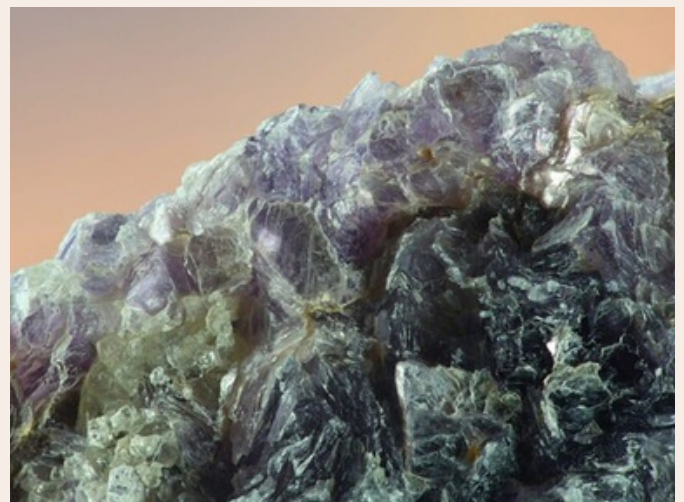
## India targeting Australian critical minerals

India's strategic initiative to explore and invest in critical minerals within Australia could be a major development for the local mining sector...

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Australian Resources & Investment | 4 Mar 2025

Photo source: [Australian Resources & Investment](#)



# AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT NEWS

## WA grows vanadium ambitions

Western Australia's push to establish a vanadium battery industry has gained further momentum, with the State Government committing to a reduced royalty framework and additional funding for industrial areas...

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Australian Mining | 24 Feb 2025

## Future made in Australia production tax credits pass the Senate

The Australian Government's Future Made in Australia (Production Tax Credit and Other Measures) Bill 2024 passed the Senate...

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Australian Government | 12 Feb 2025

## What do the new tax credits for critical minerals and green hydrogen mean?

After months of wrangling, the federal government's production tax credits for the green hydrogen and critical minerals sectors have passed the parliament...

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ABC News | 11 Feb 2025

## WA bolsters critical minerals processing

A feasibility study for a common-user critical minerals advanced processing facility based in Perth, Western Australia is set to receive a \$3 million joint investment from the WA and Federal Governments...

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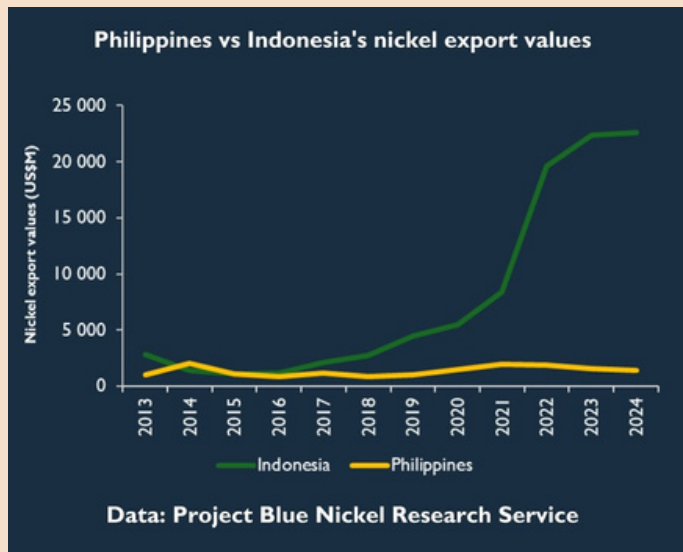
Australian Mining | 4 Feb 2025



Photo source: Australian Mining

# INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Photo source: Project Blue



## Can the Philippines replicate Indonesia's nickel ore export ban success?

The Philippines is set to prohibit raw mineral exports in a bid to incentivise investment in domestic processing, enhance higher-value exports, and create jobs. However, it will be challenging for the country to copy Indonesia's success story in the nickel market...

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Project Blue | 11 Feb 2025

## Chinese export restrictions may disrupt indium market

On 4 February 2025, the Chinese Ministry of Commerce and the General Administration of Customs issued a joint statement announcing restrictions on indium exports to "safeguard national stability"...

[Read More](#)

Project Blue | 7 Feb 2025

## Assessing the viability of a U.S.-Ukraine minerals Deal

U.S. President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky are in discussions regarding an agreement that would grant the United States access to Ukraine's critical minerals and other valuable resources...

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CSIS | 21 Feb 2025

## Copper tariffs risk rises as US initiates trade investigation

The US announced a national security probe which could lead to a 25% tariff on refined copper imports as for steel and aluminium. With the US being a net importer of refined copper, the short-term implication will be more inflationary pressures...

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Project Blue | 26 Feb 2025



Photo source: Project Blue



# BIG PICTURE THINKING

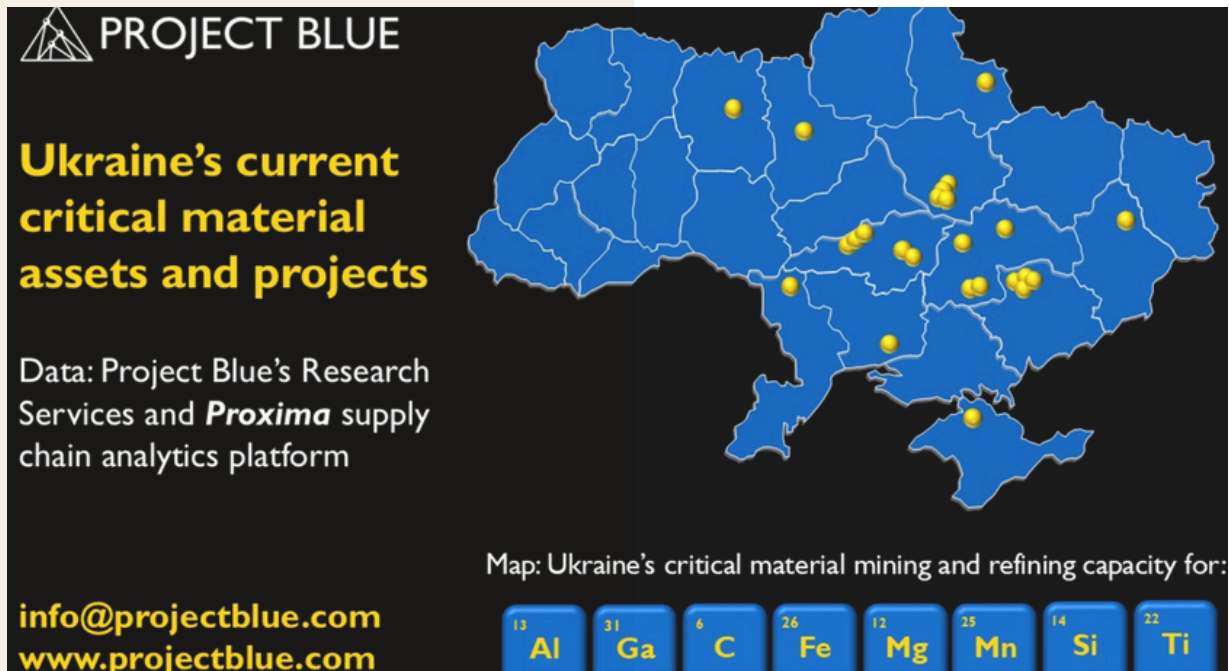


## How Australia, with friends, can secure its place in critical minerals

Australia's critical minerals sector is at a crossroads. As the United States recalibrates its industrial policies under President Donald Trump, Australia's role in securing non-Chinese supply chains for critical minerals has never been more important...

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ASPI | 21 Feb 2025



## Ukraine's current critical materials landscape

As discussions about a potential critical minerals deal between Ukraine and the USA continue to attract coverage, Project Blue experts have provided additional detail on the country's current critical materials landscape...

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Project Blue | 20 Feb 2025

## The Ukrainian minerals riches in Donald Trump activity

So let's talk about the US-Ukraine rare earths situation(ship). I was quoted in the Financial Times this morning - "The minerals rhetoric amounted to "heavy political posturing... The data is not modern, we have very little information about what's there," said Gracelin Baskaran, a director at the US Center for Strategic and International Studies...

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LinkedIn | 19 Feb 2025

# Calendar of events 2025

Do you know of an upcoming event that's not listed?  
Email: [admin@cmaaustralia.org](mailto:admin@cmaaustralia.org)

FEBURARY 2025

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MARCH 2025

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APRIL 2025

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MAY 2025

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	DATE(S)	EVENT	HOSTS/PARTNERS	LOCATION
FEB	3-6 FEB	<a href="#">Mining Inadaba</a>	HYVE	Cape Town, South Africa
	17 FEB	<a href="#">Benchmark Minerals Intelligence Sydney</a>	BenchMark	Sydney, Australia
	19 FEB	<a href="#">Benchmark Minerals Intelligence Melbourne</a>	BenchMark	Melbourne, Australia
	21 FEB	<a href="#">Benchmark Minerals Intelligence Perth</a>	BenchMark	Perth, Australia
	20-21 FEB	<a href="#">Mines and Money</a>	Mines and Money	Miami, USA
MAR	2-5 MAR	<a href="#">PDAC 2025</a>	PDAC	Toronto, Canada
APR	14 APR	<a href="#">Paydirt Conference</a>	Paydirt	Perth, Australia
JULY	23-25 JUL	<a href="#">Noosa Mining Investor Conference</a>	AMETS	Noosa, Australia
	30 JUL	<a href="#">Mine Waste &amp; Tailings Conference 2025</a>	AusIMM	Brisbane, Australia
AUG	4-6 AUG	<a href="#">Diggers &amp; Dealers Mining Forum</a>	Diggers & Dealers	Kalgoorlie, Australia
SEP	2-4 SEP	<a href="#">AusIMM Critical Minerals Conference 2025</a>	AusIMM	Perth, Australia
OCT	21-23 OCT	<a href="#">IMARC 2025</a>	IMARC	Sydney, Australia



This Newsletter has been compiled by QUT researchers:

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