



# CRITICAL MINERALS ASSOCIATION AUSTRALIA

## MARCH 2026 EDITION

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# MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



## CMA AUSTRALIA NEWS



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# Australia - EU Trade Agreement

by Natalie Herold, Senior Policy & Strategy Adviser

On 24 March 2026 President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen and the Prime Minister Anthony Albanese signed the **Australia-EU Free Trade Agreement (A-EU FTA)**. In an era of growing geopolitical uncertainty, the landmark trade deal is a clear commitment to diversifying critical supply chains and strengthening longstanding economic ties.

Alongside the FTA came two more significant announcements: A Security and Defence Partnership, and the launch of formal negotiations for Australia's association with Horizon Europe, the EU's \$155 billion flagship research and innovation program.

In an era of growing geopolitical uncertainty, Australia and the EU's deepening partnership spanning trade, research and defence is a clear commitment to forging a broader strategic alliance, diversifying critical supply chains and strengthening longstanding economic ties. It is no coincidence that trade talks which began in 2018 (and at times appeared to have stalled) have now been successfully concluded. Neither is the prominence of critical minerals, clean energy, security, and defence in the leaders' remarks.

## Why does it matter?

- For Australia, the EU is the third largest two-way trading partner and second largest source of total foreign investment. It was also the largest trading partner without a Free Trade Agreement - until now.
- The EU is 100% import-dependent on lithium, 96% on manganese, and 81% on cobalt. Australia holds world-class reserves of all three (and more) and is the world's largest lithium producer.



## What will the FTA change for critical minerals?

- 97.8 per cent of Australia's goods exports will enter the EU duty-free
- Removal of all EU tariffs on Australian critical minerals (currently up to 5.5%)
- Private EU investors will benefit from elevated foreign investment screening thresholds in line with Australia's other FTA partners, making investment opportunities in Australian resources and energy more accessible.
- A cooperation framework for R&D, responsible mining, and value chain integration, with a possibility of supporting investments in critical minerals projects

## Things to note

- The detailed FTA text is undergoing final legal checks and translation into 24 EU languages and will only be published once this has been concluded (see a preliminary version [here](#)).
- The detailed tariff schedules outlining specific duty rates by HS code have not been published yet.
- European Parliament ratification bears watching (see Mercosur).
- Entry into force likely not before 2027-28 (optimistic scenario).
- The Horizon Europe negotiations are a separate process, with Australian organisations expected to have access to the \$155 bn program from early 2027.



## CMAA supporting UK Research & Innovation Delegation to QLD

Brisbane | 10 March

Critical Minerals Association Australia was delighted to support the UK Research and Innovation and its visiting delegation of innovative UK companies, advocating a strong potential for UK–Australia collaboration across critical minerals, midstream processing and recycling technologies.

Read the full recap [here](#).



## Australian Critical Minerals R&D Hub's Science Conference

Melbourne | 18 & 19th March

CMAA was pleased to be invited to participate in the Critical Minerals R&D Hub's Science Conference in Melbourne this month, which provided a valuable update on the progress of key research projects across the Hub. The discussions reinforced the importance of strong coordination between research, industry and government to ensure promising ideas translate into commercial outcomes. We look forward to continuing to engage with the Hub and its partners as this work progresses.

Read full recap [here](#).





## CMCI CRC Funding

CMAA was delighted to see the Critical Metals for Critical Industries (CMCI) CRC secure funding, recognising the scale of ambition and collaboration behind this initiative. Having contributed from the outset as a bid partner, we are particularly pleased to see this work now come to fruition. Bringing together a broad consortium of industry, research and government partners, the CRC represents an important step forward in advancing Australia's sovereign refining capability and commercialising next-generation processing technologies.

Read the full recap [here](#).

## Paydirt Battery Minerals Conference

Perth | 21-22 April

The future of the critical minerals sector has never been more contested with the industry exposed to price swings, geopolitical strains and sudden disruptions. Paydirt's Critical Battery Minerals Conference is the premier forum for stakeholders from every link in this complicated supply chain to discuss the future of the space.

Minerals as diverse as lithium, rare earths, copper, antimony, niobium, graphite, nickel, manganese, cobalt, tin, and vanadium are attracting unparalleled attention, not only from traditional investors but also governments, carmakers and end-users around the world.

**PAYDIRT'S  
BATTERY  
MINERALS  
CONFERENCE**

**Register Here**

(inquire about a discount)

# Tivan's Speewah Fluorite Project Named in US–Japan Critical Minerals Plan

March 2026 | Source: [Tivan Limited \(ASX: TVN\)](#)

Tivan Limited's Speewah Fluorite Project in Western Australia has been formally recognised in the Joint Fact Sheet issued by the governments of Japan and the United States following the summit between Prime Minister Takaichi and President Trump in Washington DC (19 March 2026). The project is one of a select group of strategic minerals projects prioritised for government financial support under the [Japan-US Framework for Securing the Supply of Critical Minerals](#).



The project, a joint venture with Sumitomo Corporation and the Japanese Government agency JOGMEC, aims to produce acid-grade fluorspar (>97% CaF<sub>2</sub>), a critical raw material used in semiconductors, electric vehicle batteries, nuclear enrichment and refrigerants. Commercial production of 150,000 tpa is targeted from FY2028.

The United States has no commercially viable domestic fluorite projects and is entirely import-dependent for acidspar supply. Speewah's inclusion signals its importance as a western-bloc source of high-quality fluorite positioned close to major Asian industrial markets, and supports Australia's capacity to play a sovereign role in global critical minerals supply chains.

Further reading:

- ASX Announcement (23 Mar 2026): [Speewah Fluorite Project included in Joint Fact Sheet of Japan and US Governments](#)
- [Speewah Fluorite Project Feasibility Study](#)
- Tivan Limited investor page: [tivan.com.au](https://tivan.com.au)

# AUSTRALIAN INDUSTRY NEWS

## US-Iran conflict highlights opportunities for Australian battery metals supply

The US-Iran conflict has begun to tighten sulphur shipments in the Middle East, according to a report, which may provide an opportunity for Australian critical mineral producers to have a hand in providing a diversified supply chain.

With the Middle East responsible for around a quarter (24 per cent) of global sulphur production, the region remains a “linchpin” in the supply of this niche yet critical commodity, with the ongoing conflict potentially set to expose supply chain flaws.

### Read More

Australian Mining | 17 March 2026

## Lynas Rare Earths inks supply and pricing deal with US government

The US government has agreed to buy almost \$140 million worth of critical minerals from Lynas Rare Earths, reinforcing the White House’s push to secure non-Chinese sources of the elements widely used in the defence industry.

### Read More

Financial Review | 16 March 2026

## Australia backs vanadium development as Queensland opens new mining areas

The Queensland government has opened new exploration areas to develop what it calls a “world-class” vanadium region near Julia Creek in north-west Queensland, Australia. Two exploration zones [...] have been released to encourage mining companies to search for new deposits of the critical mineral.

### Read More

Project Blue | 16 March 2026

## Liontown boss says loss-making lithium miner is ready to roar

Liontown Resources says Chinese customers are showing extra interest in buying Australian lithium after shipments from Africa were disrupted by military conflict in the Middle East.

### Read More

Financial Review | 12 March 2026

## When it comes to smelter bailouts, being a ‘strategic’ asset helps

A big part of the reason that Boyne, near Gladstone, has secured its future before the other Australian smelters is because the Queensland government has significant control over power generation in the state through its statutory authority Stanwell Corporation.

### Read More

Financial Review | 25 March 2026

# AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT NEWS

## Australia pushes critical minerals cooperation at Tokyo energy forum

A big part of the reason that Boyne, near Gladstone, has secured its future before the other Australian smelters is because the Queensland government has significant control over power generation in the state through its statutory authority Stanwell Corporation.

### [Read More](#)

Australian Mining | 17 March 2026



Federal Resources Minister Madeleine King speaking at QME 2024. Image: Prime Creative Media / Australian Mining



## New CRC targets Australia's critical minerals refining capability

The Federal Government will provide \$53 million in funding to support a new research centre aimed at developing Australia's critical minerals refining sector.

### [Read More](#)

Australian Mining | 10 March 2026

## Australia to join G7 critical minerals alliance, Canada's Carney says

Australia and Canada on Thursday signed a series of new agreements on critical minerals, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said, including Australia joining the G7 minerals alliance.

Western nations have been attempting to diversify their supply chains away from China, which still controls the majority of production and processing of critical minerals, essential for semiconductors and defence applications.

### [Read More](#)

Reuters | 5 March 2026



Image source: Reuters

# AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT NEWS

## New Critical Minerals and Gold guide for the NT

The Critical Minerals and Gold in the Northern Territory 2026 documents the Territory’s resource endowment for 21 global critical minerals, and exploration potential for a further 14 critical minerals. Five new commodities, bismuth, iron ore, lead, silver and uranium, have been added to the Territory’s critical minerals list in 2026.

**Read More**

Resourcing The Territory | 28 Feb 2026

## Release of Australia’s Identified Mineral Resources (AIMR) 2025 report

As home to some of the largest Mineral Resources of many of the world’s critical minerals, Australia is well-placed to support global demand, according to Geoscience Australia’s recent publication Australia’s Identified Mineral Resources (AIMR) 2025.

**Read More**

Geoscience Australia | 2 March 2026



Image source: Reuters

## Australia and EU seal trade deal, seek to cut reliance on China for critical minerals

Australia and the European Union signed a free trade agreement after eight years of negotiations, removing tariffs on almost all goods and potentially easing EU access to Australian critical minerals.

**Read More**

Reuters | 24 March 2026

## Securing Australia's future fuel supply and critical minerals strategic reserve

The Export Finance and Insurance Corporation Amendment (Strategic Reserve) Bill 2026 was introduced in the House of Representatives to support the establishment of a Strategic Reserve. The Bill will give legislative effect to the Government’s election commitment to establish the Critical Minerals Strategic Reserve. Export Finance Australia will have the ability to secure supply, sell and selectively stockpile critical minerals to position Australia as a trusted and stable partner in high-value, vulnerable supply chains.

**Read More**

Minister of Resources Office | 31 March 2026

# INTERNATIONAL NEWS

## In its hunt for critical minerals, the US is misconstruing what is and is not America's

Americans have a reputation for being bad at world geography, particularly when it comes to correctly identifying what is – and is not – part of the United States of America.

President Donald Trump's April 2025 executive order "unleashing America's offshore critical minerals" provides an example. It purports to "unleash" seabed minerals both within and far outside U.S. jurisdiction.

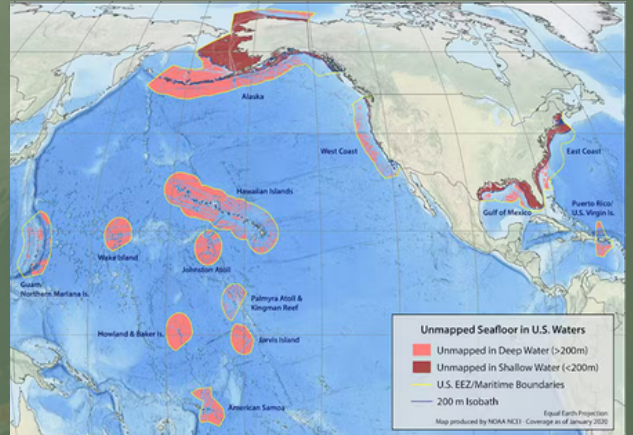


Image source: The Conversations

### Read More

The Conversation | 3 March 2026



Image source: Shutterstock

## Russia to auction niobium deposit in Krasnoyarsk region

An auction is set to take place in 2026 in Russia for the rights to develop the Tatarskoye subsurface area, part of the First Ore Zone in the Krasnoyarsk Territory. The licence will grant rights for both exploration and production, including the processing of waste generated from subsurface operations...

### Read More

Project Blue | 24 March 2026

## US International Trade Commission rejects tariffs on Chinese active anode

On 12 March 2026, the US International Trade Commission (ITC) issued a 2-1 final ruling, overturning the US Department of Commerce's (Commerce) proposed anti-dumping (AD) and countervailing (CV) duties on Chinese active anode material (AAM) imports.

### Read More

Project Blue | 27 March 2026



Image source: Project Blue

## US uncertainty influences global polysilicon market outlook

The US national security investigation into polysilicon and its derivatives under Section 232 has reportedly led to a surge in enquiries for domestically produced material, which is currently viewed as the only product not subject to policy-related uncertainty.

[Read More](#)

Project Blue | 17 March 2026



Image source: The Conversations

## Pentagon sought fresh supply of 13 critical minerals day before Iran attack



Pentagon; Image source: Reuters

The U.S. military asked mining companies last Friday to help boost domestic supplies of 13 critical minerals used to make semiconductors, weapons and other products, a document reviewed by Reuters showed. The request, the day before the U.S. and Israel launched strikes on Iran, is the latest example of Washington's push for more access to the materials used widely in warfare.

[Read More](#)

Reuters | 4 March 2026

## Australia's Lynas agrees potential rare earths deal with South Korea's LS Eco Energy

Australia's Lynas Rare Earths and South Korea's LS Eco Energy plan to work together to process rare earths, to help meet demand from customers scrambling to secure non-Chinese sources of the key metals. Lynas would supply rare earth oxides to a processing plant that LS Eco Energy plans to build in Vietnam...

[Read More](#)

Reuters | 26 March 2026



Image source: Reuters

# BIG PICTURE THINKING

## Why the U.S. is unlikely to curtail China's critical minerals dominance

The United States government recently hosted a critical minerals summit aimed at reducing China's predominant role in the global production of smartphones, weapons systems, lithium-ion batteries and electric vehicles (EVs).

### Read More

The Conversation | 3 March 2026



## The war in Iran isn't about oil, it's about sulphur...

On a strategic level, there are two wars going on. One is the US debacle in trying to bomb regime change in Iran. The other is the war of Israel with their belief in an existential threat to the nation which de facto means endless wars in the region and endless 'enemies'.

For Israel, any damage to Iran is a win-win. For Trump, it is a 'zero-sum' catastrophe.

### Read More

Spectator | 29 March 2026



## France among nations eyeing Australia critical minerals...

France is among the countries poised to invest in Australian critical minerals projects, Australia's resources minister said on Thursday, as Canberra's framework deal with the U.S. prompts nations with advanced manufacturing sectors to secure access to supply.

### Read More

Reuters | 26 March 2026

## US deep-sea mineral processing plant planned by Glomar, Australia's Cobalt Blue

Deep-sea mining firm Glomar Minerals and Australia's Cobalt Blue Holdings (COB.AX), opens new tab said on Monday they plan to build a U.S. refinery to process critical minerals extracted from the bottom of the Pacific Ocean within three years.

### Read More

Reuters | 30 March 2026

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

## 01 | January

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## 12 | December

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# EVENTS AT A GLANCE

**21 – 22**  
APR

**Paydirt's Critical Battery Minerals Conference | Perth**

PREMIER FORUM FOR STAKEHOLDERS IN THE SUPPLY CHAIN

The future of the critical minerals sector has never been more contested with the industry exposed to price swings, geopolitical strains and sudden disruptions.

**16 – 17**  
JUN

**Future of Mining Conference | Perth**

MINING SMARTER. MINING BETTER.

Geopolitical tensions, shifting trade policies, and emerging tariffs are creating uncertainty for miners and investors. Meanwhile, miners must adopt cleaner, smarter technologies to meet net-zero demands.

**21 – 23**  
SEP

**AusIMM Critical Minerals Conference | Brisbane**

LEADING THE CRITICAL MINERALS CONVERSATION

As global demand for critical minerals continues to grow and the world transitions to clean energy, the mining community must engage in open and ongoing dialogue around how it can meet this demand

**27 – 29**  
OCT

**International Mining and Resources Conference (IMARC) | Sydney**

COLLABORATING ON TRENDS IN MINING

Where the most influential people in the mining industry come together, delivering ideas, inspiration, and serving as a global meeting ground for industry leaders.

DEC

**Critical Minerals Association UK Annual Conference | London**



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