



# Navigating Sustainability Transitions in Australian regions undergoing critical mineral development

Engaging with diverse voices to deepen just development outcomes across the mining life-cycle

Increased global demand for minerals and metals required for renewable energy to address climate change is driving a transition in mining in Australia. This transition includes increased exploration and opening of new mines to produce critical minerals for clean energy and other advanced technologies. Pressure to meet global demand for critical minerals comes with risks of insufficient engagement and benefits to Indigenous Peoples and local communities and environmental degradation. The Navigating Sustainability Transitions project seeks to listen to diverse voices on what pathways exist for ensuring just and sustainable outcomes in critical mineral development. A core focus of this work is the values held by Traditional Owners and local communities in decisions about mining – what is important for them in the way decisions are made, and achieving the future they want.



We seek to build capacities for people with diverse perspectives to explore, understand, and act on challenges of just sustainability transitions in Australian regions undergoing critical minerals development.

Engaging with Traditional Owners, industry, government, and society, we will explore the different ways in which actors are driving change and innovation towards just sustainability. We seek to understand the diverse values held by Traditional Owners, local communities, and stakeholders in mining systems, and the capabilities and enabling conditions that allow for decision-making to meet a wide range of needs, aspirations, and co-benefits. We are focusing on early stages in the mining life-cycle, but recognize that justice and sustainability in mining encompasses multiple domains and activities.

## Listening to diverse values held by Indigenous and local communities

Increased demand for critical minerals is happening globally, but many of the changes will be felt most in local regional areas. Traditional Owners and local communities have strong connections and knowledge of landscapes, necessitating respect for local values and decision-making processes. Critical minerals may bring opportunities to regional Australia, but it's important to understand what new pressures might also emerge, and how to navigate them.

## Understanding enablers and constraints of systems transformations

This project takes a holistic approach to understanding pathways towards justice and critical minerals. As well as listening to local values, the team is interested in learning about policy, legal, regional, and private sector innovations shaping just and sustainable mining futures. Our research co-design methodology is guided by this approach – engaging in places, making connections, and creating opportunities for learning across different regions and amongst different actors involved in mining.

## Location and timeline

We have identified Queensland as a focal site for this research. The project will end in December 2025.

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## Our project is guided by these research questions:

1. What valued outcomes are sought by Traditional Owners, local communities, and actors in regions where critical mineral deposits exist?
2. What innovations and decision-making processes directly influence the realisation of these values?
3. How do systemic or structural contexts enable or inhibit decision-making and outcomes?
4. What courses of action and capabilities exist or have potential to address unjust or unsustainable outcomes?

## How can I be involved?

The CSIRO team would like to meet with Traditional Owners and local communities living in Queensland regions where there are critical mineral deposits, as well as key actors involved in mining. People and organizations that are interested in taking part can choose to be interviewed or have a group meeting to discuss experiences of mining, local values, and future aspirations. After this initial meeting, this project will work with a small group of interested people to share learnings, including workshops, writing reports, and engaging in multi-stakeholder dialogue.

## Pathways to impact

This project is not focused on a specific program or policy. The purpose is to listen, learn, and share. Information gathered through this project will contribute to improving understanding of justice and sustainability in critical minerals among key actors involved in decision-making, including government, industry, and community. Results will inform future research, policy, and practices.

## About the team

We are a team of scientists and researchers with diverse backgrounds and experience. The project co-leads are Rebecca Riggs and Tira Foran. Team members are Kristina Fisher, Nicky Grigg, Marcus Barber, James Langston, Andy Wilkins, Sabrina Chakori, and Claudia Munera Roldan. Our Traditional Owner engagement is led by Kristina, an Ewamian woman from Queensland Gulf Country.

The Navigating Sustainability Transitions project is internally funded by CSIRO and is part of the Valuing Sustainability Future Science Platform.

## For further information

<https://research.csiro.au/vsfsp/>

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