



Department of **Mines,**
Petroleum and Exploration

Abandoned Mines Policy

Consultation draft for comment December 2025 – January 2026







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Acknowledgement of Country

We respectfully acknowledge Aboriginal peoples as being the Traditional Custodians of Western Australia. We acknowledge the enduring connection Aboriginal people continue to share with the land, sea, and sky through both their ancestral ties and custodianship to Country. We pay our respect to Elders both past and present, and acknowledge the value brought through the collective contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Western Australia.



Foreword

The Department of Mines, Petroleum and Exploration (DMPE) has been implementing the Abandoned Mines Program to limit risks and liabilities associated with abandoned mine sites in WA based on the *Abandoned Mines Policy 2016*.

The 2016 policy had a requirement for a five-year review which coincided with the statutory 10-year review of the *Mining Rehabilitation Fund Act 2012* (MRF Act). Accordingly, it is appropriate to refresh the original Abandoned Mines Policy in line with the Cook Government response to the 2024 MRF Act review and current abandoned mine practices.

I am pleased to release a *Draft Abandoned Mines Policy* for six-week public review, commencing on 15 December 2025 and closing on 30 January 2026. The draft policy includes policy principles and definitions of terms.

I invite you to make submissions in writing to DMPE by email by the closing date of the public review period.

Chris Shaw

Director General, Department of Mines, Petroleum And Exploration

When reviewing, consider these questions:

<p>1</p> <p>Do you agree with the proposed 'principles of policy'?</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Do you agree with the proposed 'definitions'?</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Are there any other issues that should be considered for inclusion in this policy?</p>
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Submit your review via email: abandonedmines@dmpe.wa.gov.au

Submissions close 30 January 2026.

Introduction

Western Australia (WA) has a rich mining history which, together with its significant contribution to the State's economy, has left a legacy of old mine workings which have been abandoned following exploration or mining. Abandoned mines can pose potential risks to community health and safety and to the environment.

The Mining Rehabilitation Fund (MRF), established by the *Mining Rehabilitation Fund Act 2012* (MRFA), provides the WA Government with a source of funding for the rehabilitation of *abandoned mine* sites and other land affected by former mining operations.

While today's mining operators are obligated to rehabilitate sites in accordance with Mine Closure Plans, there is still a risk that sites impacted by mining could become abandoned.

MRF funds will be used to rehabilitate both legacy and future abandoned mine sites when all other avenues to ensure rehabilitation have been exhausted.

Projects executed under the MRFA by the Abandoned Mines Program are prioritised following a risk assessment and prioritisation process. Management decisions regarding *abandoned mine* features on individual sites need to balance safety and other risks, costs and benefits to both the WA community and environment, and also consider the varying values of abandoned mines.



Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework that guides decision making, resource allocation and project prioritisation by the WA Government relating to the rehabilitation of abandoned mine sites funded from the MRF.

The policy ensures decision making is undertaken in a strategic manner to mitigate risks to community safety and the environment, and considers *potential value* under a prioritised approach.

Policy principles



Risk assessment and prioritisation

- A risk-based approach focussed on community safety and environmental impact will form the basis for abandoned mine feature or site prioritisation.
- Risks associated with an abandoned mine site will be identified and analysed to inform the rehabilitation activities.



Valuing abandoned mine features and sites

- Identify cultural, heritage, environmental, resource potential and economic opportunities associated with an abandoned mine site, and consider these when developing a rehabilitation works program.



Engagement with responsible land managers and other relevant stakeholders

- Stakeholder engagement will enable the interests and concerns of those potentially affected by abandoned mines to be considered in decision-making.
- Responsible land managers will be regarded as decision makers.
- Through the planning and execution of rehabilitation projects, opportunities will be identified for local Aboriginal people to be employed on Country. Traditional Owner engagement will be consistent with the WA Government's Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy 2021–2029.





Information sharing and leading practice

- Rehabilitation project outcomes will be reviewed to enable a continuous improvement approach in addressing risks associated with abandoned mine sites.
- The project implementation framework and prioritisation process will be reviewed and adjusted as required.
- Information regarding the identification, prioritisation, management and/or rehabilitation of abandoned mine sites throughout WA will be publicly accessible.



Governance

- Formal, transparent governance will support funding decisions, track spending and clearly define responsibilities and accountability.
- Expenditure for rehabilitation of abandoned mine features is compliant and audited under government expenditure directions.





Definitions

Abandoned mine sites

Areas of land where mining has been carried out in, on or under the land, where a mining operation has ceased, and where no individual, company or organisation can be held responsible for rehabilitation.

Abandoned mine sites are declared by notice in the *Government Gazette*.

An abandoned mine site may comprise of multiple areas of land or site features that may or may not be adjacent to each other, and includes the routes which may have been formerly established to access the area/s.

Abandoned mine features

Features include any mine shafts, pit voids, mining plant and support infrastructure, constructed landforms including mined residues and tailings storage facilities, access and haul roads, bore fields or other features that were built or used to carry out a mining activity.

Potential value

The potential cultural, heritage, environmental, resource potential and economic opportunity of an abandoned mine site that may be considered when evaluating rehabilitation options.

This may also include the potential for future mining associated with an abandoned mine site.

Rehabilitation of an abandoned mine site

The range of activities undertaken in consultation with stakeholders on an abandoned mine site to achieve a safe, stable, non-polluting condition in a culturally sensitive manner, in consideration of potential post mining land use.

Rehabilitation activities may include some or all of the following:

- **remediation and/or rehabilitation planning, studies, and/or investigations** associated with an abandoned mine feature, affected land, or potentially affected land;
- the **assessment of any risk** related to an abandoned mine site, an abandoned mine feature, affected land or potentially affected land;
- **decommissioning, deconstruction, removing, modifying or making safe** any abandoned mine feature, or affected land, including where necessary re-establishment of access;
- **monitoring, mitigating, managing, removing, treating or cleaning up any waste or other materials, including water**, on an abandoned mine site or land affected or potentially affected by mining activities carried out on an abandoned mine site or by an abandoned mine feature;
- **maintaining, managing, repairing, improving or monitoring the condition of land** affected or potentially affected by mining activities carried out on an abandoned mine site or by an abandoned mine feature, including physically stabilising terrain and revegetating the land; and
- **mitigating, managing, removing or monitoring risks to public health or safety and/or to the environment** resulting from previous mining activities.



Contact us

abandonedmines@dmpe.wa.gov.au



Review

This policy will be reviewed every five years or as required by DMPE, in consultation with the Mining Rehabilitation Advisory Panel, industry and the community.

Government of Western Australia

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8.30am – 4.30pm

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