

Foundation Project 2.1: Understanding the values of stakeholders in Australian post-mining economies



INTRODUCTION

CRC TiME seeks to contribute to the integration of mine closure planning and post-mining development to improve outcomes for communities, industries and the environment.

An accurate understanding of the values of CRC TiME's stakeholders is directly relevant to its aim – to integrate the policy domains of mine closure planning and regional economic development that have distinct goals.

Understanding these values requires inviting Indigenous people, residents and workers in mining regions, mine licensees, representatives of government agencies at varying levels, along with experts associated with mining services and research organisations, to express matters of persistent concern or importance to them about post-mining development.

This project posed questions about stakeholders' desired post-mining outcomes; challenges or concerns related to achievement of desired outcomes; actions they were taking or considered necessary to realise desired outcomes; and their knowledge of other stakeholders' preferred outcomes, to better understand the values around post-mining development.

THE CHALLENGE

At its establishment in mid-2020, CRC TiME had not conducted detailed analysis of the values held across its multi-stakeholder partnership.

This research project is the first to describe and classify the diversity of values related to mine closure and post-mining development, held by 26 individuals affiliated with six CRC TiME stakeholder groups in three Australian regions.

KEY FINDINGS

- Stakeholders believe the best possible post-mining outcome to be the definition and realisation of significant net-positive regional development outcomes – that is, the quality of sustainable development outcomes in a region realised by the deliberate transformation of that region's assets, liabilities, opportunities, and risks, accumulated over its history of mining. They described net-positive outcomes as those that achieved mutual reinforcing benefits among specific values.
- Stakeholders believe the achievement of net-positive outcomes requires a balanced and just distribution of responsibility between relevant actors. That is, the distribution of public and private opportunity and risk required to mobilise investment in net-positive outcomes.
- Based on stakeholder observations and aspirations, it is argued that the above concepts constitute the overarching values of stakeholders in mining regions facing transition. Such values could spur innovative thinking and policy argument about specific outcomes and responsibilities to act.
- Values and policy arguments must, however, be considered together with the other elements of policy or political economic regimes; those being, governing mine closure planning, and post-mining development.
- The mine closure regime regards the value of risk mitigation as having primary importance. However, the post-mining development regime appears to value pragmatism and adaptiveness in equal importance to risk mitigation.
- Distinct policy regimes with overlapping values and institutional arrangement results in fragmented governance of mining transition in regions. Stakeholders were acutely aware of, and often frustrated with this outcome.

THE OPPORTUNITY

The project invited research participants in their individual capacity – not as formal stakeholders – to express their conception of best possible post-mining outcomes, and associated challenges, for the regions of Southwest Western Australia, Gove Peninsula (Northern Territory), and Latrobe Valley (Victoria).

Approximately 20 participants also attended a CRC TiME conference session to discuss their values related to transition of a mining economy.

A customised methodology was developed and tested. Notable components include a refined conceptual framework, which takes a policy-oriented approach to values, and the compilation of a comprehensive set of categories of value to support in-depth analysis of interview content. Categories of value included: (i) values related to place; (ii) values related to substantive or procedural 'goods'; and (iii) values related to elements of the social and biophysical 'system context' in which mining transition is embedded.

OUTCOMES

To arrive at the project's key findings, stakeholders involved in this research firstly identified the best possible post-mining

outcomes – and associated challenges and values – at each of the three locations, as follows:

- Rehabilitation of coal mine pit voids in the South West region faces complex challenges related to water quality and access. Notable alignments of value included safety and risk associated with pit lakes and AMD (acid and metalliferous drainage), as well as innovative use of fly ash for geopolymer concrete manufacturing.
- The Gove Peninsula lies within a region of very strong Indigenous cultural continuity. Stakeholders had a strong focus on social, cultural, economic, and infrastructure issues, with the Peninsula transition being an important example of how to recognise and prioritise Indigenous Australians, yet remain inclusive of others with a stake in transition. By doing so, it can generate sustainable and resilient outcomes for the region and the wider community.
- The uncertainty around potential and preferred landforms at Latrobe Valley inhibits community and other stakeholder engagement in envisioning future land uses. Stakeholders, however, generally agreed that water was the preferred mine pit rehabilitation option, and that the ability to access water for rehabilitation would enable multiple post-mining development options.

NEXT STEPS

The overarching values expressed by the stakeholders could inform new or reinvigorated policy arguments, in turn contributing to refinement of institutional arrangements.

Additionally, collaborative processes and structures were identified in each of the three case study regions. In future, these existing forms of collaboration could serve as organisational platforms for stakeholders to work towards greater integration of mine closure planning and post-mining development.

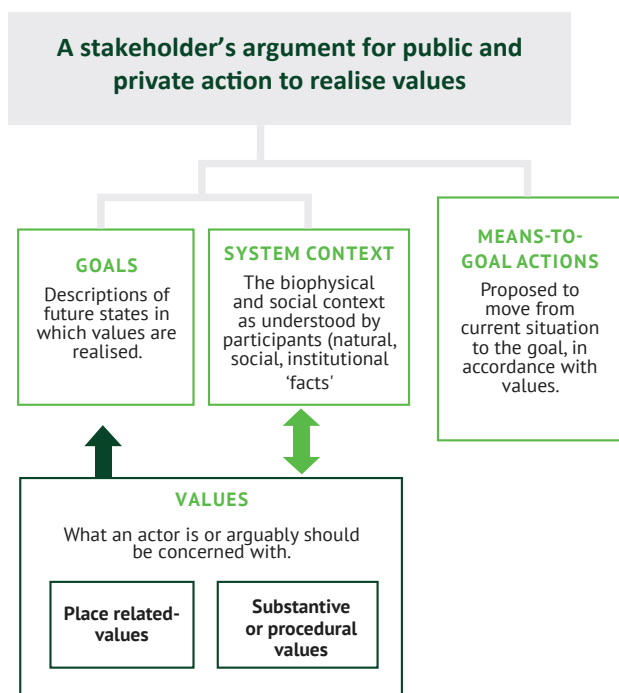
PROJECT IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

CSIRO; Curtin University; The University of Queensland

PROJECT PUBLICATIONS

[REVIEW FULL REPORT](#)

Foran, T., Barber, M. and Ackermann, F. (2022). [Understanding the values of stakeholders in Australian post-mining economies](#). CRC TiME Limited, Perth.



Summary of project core conceptual framework. Adapted from Fairclough and Fairclough (2012).

ABOUT US

The Cooperative Research Centre for Transformations in Mining Economies is part of Australia's national innovation ecosystem. Our diverse partnership brings scale, collaboration and coordinated investment to tackle the most complex mine closure and post-mine transition challenges. Together we're rethinking what's possible to improve outcomes for people, communities, the environment and industry.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians across all the lands on which we live and work, and we pay our respects to Elders both past and present.