



CRC TiME Project Concept Brief

Developing and trialling a framework to guide regional repurposing of closed and abandoned mines in Queensland: a people-centred approach

Proposal proponents

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What is the issue?

There are about 120 complex abandoned mine sites in Queensland. Some, such as Mount Morgan, Mount Oxide, and Hopeland (ex-Linc Energy), are currently managed through the Abandoned Mine Lands Program (AMLPL). There are also numerous closed mines. The Queensland government has identified several locations that are a priority for them. This project will work with the government to ensure that the project is relevant and the outcomes achievable.

The issue of managing abandoned and closed mine sites is also of concern to locally affected community groups. Though the focus may be on ensuring that the post-mining landscape is returned to a safe, stable and non-polluting condition, this is often not the *only* priority. There are also often opportunities to repurpose and reimagine these landscapes for economic development and other uses. Likewise, it is often those stakeholders with local and regional knowledge, and thus those with most at stake, who may have considered the most appropriate and compelling repurposing scenarios. The place to begin in identifying and enabling these opportunities is at the local level.

According to the Queensland regulator, community consultation is a key component of progressive rehabilitation and closure (PRC) plans and should be used to inform outcomes stated in the PRC plan. They also indicate that appropriate post mining land uses (PMLUs) and non-use management areas (NUMAs) should be consistent with, or have regard to community expectations.² Yet, what are the most appropriate forums to enable consideration and inclusion of community expectations; when is the most appropriate time to bring in external technical expertise (eg; environmental science, geo-chemistry, business development); and what are the most effective decision-making models for reaching consensus in this multi-stakeholder context?

¹ Pending availability. We have another experienced staff member (Julia Keenan) who will be able to step in if required.

² Queensland Government, Department of Environment and Science. 2019 (reviewed 2023). *Guidelines- Progressive rehabilitation and closure plans*. Section 3.5

How can the issue be resolved?

We will develop a framework that supports practitioners – including the mining industry, government, investors and community groups – to consider and engage with potential repurposing scenarios. It will address the “notable gap in mine closure between policy and regulatory settings, and actual on-the-ground performance”.³ The framework will be people-centred and ensure that regional identity and aspirations are at the core of scenario building and also guide potential implementation. We will develop and trial the framework in stages in a proof-of-concept approach, beginning with one site. The transferability of the framework will be trialled at different sites in subsequent projects (not outlined here). Though we will draw on lessons from case studies from Queensland and other contexts, this project is driven by the practical considerations of application and providing guidance for uptake and impact.

What are the project objectives?

With a focus on the Queensland context, we will:

- Develop a people-centred framework to guide an inclusive process and enable a diverse range of stakeholders to consider potential repurposing scenarios.
- Provide guidance on the most appropriate mechanisms that are the best fit for local consultation, participation and consensus building.
- Trial the framework at the same site it was developed in a proof-of-concept approach to consider the relative advantages and disadvantages of the Framework.
- Subsequently establish a method and approach to roll out the framework to additional locations.
- Identify potential further locations to test and refine the framework.

Methodology

We propose multiple stages to undertaking this project: Brisbane-based meetings; desktop review; engagement with community groups and stakeholders; introductory fieldwork trip; planning; fieldwork; and local focus groups.

A foundational part of the framework will be understanding the regional & local socio-demographic data of the potential site to provide a baseline of community and regional characteristics enabling the team to build up a profile – which will become a component of the framework.

What are the expected benefits and outcomes?

- The framework is proposed as a resource to support the active inclusion of local and regional stakeholders in decision-making and thus in supporting sustainable outcomes; the logic being that local support and interest is more likely to drive a successful repurposing venture than local indifference or opposition.
- Likewise, aligning with the local and regional identities and aspirations is core to understanding the ways in which residents envision the future of their town and their region.

Why should my organisation get involved?

Participation will contribute to the development of a novel, piloted framework that enables companies and governments to ensure repurposing abandoned and closed mines is centred on, and supported by, local community interests and aspirations. The framework will be an enabling resource that acts as a bridge between the mining industry, community, investors and government – to support repurposing opportunities. It will open conversations, support reclamation and regional economic development.

Contacts

For further details or to indicate your interest, please contact Assoc. Prof. Sarah Holcombe (s.holcombe@uq.edu.au) or Prof. Tom Measham (tom.measham@crctime.com.au).

³ Jame Purtell – Queensland mine rehabilitation commissioner. Mine Closure 2023 conference.