



MINE CLOSURE & RELINQUISHMENT

NSW MINERALS COUNCIL FACT SHEET

What is mine closure and relinquishment?

After the extraction of the mineral resource has completed and there are no opportunities for extending the mine or accessing additional resources the mine moves into the final phase in its development life-cycle. This final phase is referred to as the mine closure and relinquishment phase.

Mine closure occurs at the completion of the mineral extraction phase and includes decommissioning and removal of infrastructure, followed by final landform shaping and rehabilitation of areas not previously rehabilitated during the mine extraction phase. Relinquishment occurs post mine closure and refers to the handing back of the mining tenements and the recovery of any residual rehabilitation bonds held by government against the mine's rehabilitation commitments. Relinquishment only occurs once all rehabilitation and final land use objectives for the site have been met.

The period between mine closure and relinquishment is used by the mine owner to address any residual rehabilitation commitments and to demonstrate

through post-rehabilitation monitoring, management, and evaluation that the rehabilitation completion criteria agreed between the mine and the government is on track to achieving the desired post-mine land use.

Planning for successful mine closure occurs even before development of the mine commences and is a key driver in the mine design, planning and sequencing process. This enables the mine to be progressively rehabilitated toward a well understood and acceptable final landform and land use outcome. This process is known as life-of-mine planning and is used by mine planners to balance the efficient recovery of the mineral resource with rehabilitation and mine closure objectives agreed between the mine owner and the government. The mine closure objectives are commonly enshrined in the conditions of development consent and described in further detail in mining operation plans or rehabilitation management plans that are approved by the government. Social and community aspects are considered throughout the whole mining process.



Regulation of relinquishment

The Department of Planning and Environment, the Resources Regulator, and the Division of Resources and Geoscience play a role in regulating mine closure and relinquishment activities. By achieving relinquishment, the mine owner will have shown that the rehabilitation objectives agreed with the regulator have been met, enabling the mining lease to be surrendered to the government. In addition to the relinquishment of a mining lease, the mine owner must also demonstrate it has fulfilled all the rehabilitation requirements under the Development Consent.

A mine owner must submit annual reports to the NSW government, which reviews a mine owner's rehabilitation activities and results, and monitors the site's progress in achieving rehabilitation and closure targets against the agreed closure objectives and closure criteria. This data is also available for review by wider stakeholders as part of the regular reporting arrangements.

NSW mining industry principles

Mine owners consider the following principles in meeting their mine closure and relinquishment objectives:

- Plan for mine closure well before mining commences and throughout the life of mine.
- Monitor progress through regular reporting of rehabilitation and closure targets.
- Provide all necessary monitoring information to the regulator and stakeholders to obtain sign-off.
- Engage with stakeholders to determine how to maximise the beneficial use of land post-mining.
- Meet relinquishment requirements through effective rehabilitation and closure initiatives.
- Fulfil all required obligations specified by NSW and federal governments to obtain sign-off.
- Collaborate and share key closure and relinquishment learnings across industry.

Guidance materials

A number of valuable resources have been developed to help guide the mining industry to deliver high quality closure and relinquishment outcomes. These include:

- **Standards for mine closure and reclamation management** – Australia participates in an International Standards Organisation Committee focused on developing standards to minimize impacts that occur during the whole life cycle of resource development, from exploration to closure and follow up management. For more information visit: <https://www.iso.org/committee/5052041.html>
- **Planning for Integrated Mine Closure Toolkit** – The International Council of Mining and Metals (ICMM) toolkit provides practical guidance for closing a mine in a sustainable manner to ensure the long-term environmental and social impacts of a mine are managed effectively. For more information visit <https://www.icmm.com/en-gb/publications/mine-closure/planning-for-integrated-mine-closure-toolkit>

For more information:

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