

MEDIA RELEASE



Thursday 10 October 2024

Australian Aluminium Council renews call for inclusion of Bauxite, Alumina, and Aluminium on Critical Minerals listing

The Australian Aluminium Council has renewed its call for the inclusion of bauxite, alumina and aluminium to Australia's Critical Minerals list, as a new report highlights growing risks to the sector.

The report "*Vulnerabilities & Opportunities in Australia's Upstream Aluminium Sectors*" highlights the increasing risks to Australia's domestic upstream supply chain due to increased geopolitical risk combined with rising costs and prolonged regulatory approvals.

Adding these materials to the Critical Minerals list would not only support Australian industry and job creation but also send a clear signal to international trading partners that Australia is committed to safeguarding its vital role in the global supply of bauxite, alumina and aluminium required for transition to a low-carbon world.

Australian Aluminium Council CEO Marghanita Johnson said, "The current inclusion of aluminium on Australia's Strategic Mineral List acknowledges the metal's importance in the transition to net zero but does not come with much needed policy support".

"Instead, it is a 'watchlist' of minerals that would meet the criteria for being a Critical Mineral but are not currently considered vulnerable to disruption".

Ms Johnson emphasised the need for immediate action to protect the aluminium industry to avoid the same fate as other critical minerals. "We do not want aluminium to become the new nickel which until early this year was also considered a Strategic Mineral. The Government's decision to move it to the Critical Minerals list in February was too little too late," she said.

"The industry has been vocal in urging the Australian Government to recognise the growing threats to our bauxite and alumina sectors," Ms Johnson stated. "In the past 18 months, three alumina refineries have been impaired and one has been curtailed – we need the Government to act."

The report highlighted the need for a streamlined regulatory process to unlock the potential of Australia's bauxite resources. While Indonesian refineries are set to expand alumina capacity by 6Mt over the next five years, Australia faces mounting challenges, including rising capital, labour, and energy costs, compounded by lengthy regulatory approvals.

Ms. Johnson added, "One of the greatest cost increases expected over the next five years will come from delays in environmental approvals, limiting access to bauxite for our alumina refineries. Indonesia can approve and build an integrated bauxite mine and alumina refinery faster than Australia can approve a bauxite mine."

To address these issues, the Council urges the Australian Government to:

- **Immediately include bauxite, alumina, and aluminium on Australia's Critical Minerals list**, recognising the vulnerability of the integrated sector and its importance to both domestic and global supply chains.
- **Streamline environmental approvals** for bauxite mines and alumina refineries, balancing environmental protection with commercial realities and economic benefits.
- **Support the aluminium sector's pivotal role in the global green economy**, as Australia's alumina and aluminium play a key role in the transition to a sustainable, low-carbon future.

Vulnerabilities & Opportunities in Australia's Upstream Aluminium Sectors is available [here](#).

-ENDS-

ABOUT THE COUNCIL

The Australian Aluminium Council (the Council) represents Australia's bauxite mining, alumina refining, aluminium smelting and downstream processing industries. The aluminium industry has been operating in Australia since 1955, and over the decades has been a significant contributor to the nation's economy. It includes six mines which collectively produce over 100 Mt per annum making Australia the world's largest producer of bauxite. Australia is the world's largest exporter of alumina with five alumina refineries producing around 20 Mt per annum of alumina. Australia is the seventh largest producer of aluminium, with four aluminium smelters and additional downstream processing industries including more than 20 extrusion presses. Aluminium is Australia's highest earning manufacturing export. The industry directly employs more than 20,000 people, including 6,600 full time equivalent contractors. It also indirectly supports a further 55,000 families predominantly in regional Australia.

MEDIA CONTACT

Marghanita Johnson, CEO, Australian Aluminium Council,
+61 (0)466 224 636 or marghanita.johnson@aluminium.org.au