

Minerals resources strategy consultation 2024
Resources Market Policy
Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment

By email: resourcesfeedback@mbie.govt.nz

31 July 2024

Re: Submission on proposed minerals strategy to 2040

Dear Resources Market Policy,

The Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy (AusIMM) welcomes the opportunity to outline our recommendations to the New Zealand Government on a 2040 Minerals Strategy.

We commend the initiative to define a clear strategic framework for the resources industry and support the overarching goal of delivering economic benefit for the New Zealand community in a responsible manner. Our key recommendations are:

1. Add a fourth strategic pillar acknowledging the fundamental role of professionalism, best practice and technical excellence in enabling industry growth.
2. Invest in geoscience to uncover the new mineral opportunities that will enhance New Zealand's profile as a world-class destination for mining, mining investment and mining professionals, and accelerate the completion of a Critical Minerals List.
3. Engage industry and technical experts to guide administration of a contemporary regulatory framework for the minerals sector.
4. Raise New Zealand's profile as a geologically prospective and economically attractive jurisdiction by participating in international industry events.

We provide detailed responses to the Ministry's consultation questions overleaf.

AusIMM is the peak body representing people in the resources sector, with more than 15,000 members across 110 countries. Established in 1893 and operating under Royal Charter, our mission is to advance the sector for the benefit of the community. We pursue this through the standards, innovation and technical excellence of our professional community.

AusIMM were pleased to meet Minister Jones and provide our initial insights on the Strategy in July of this year. We look forward to continuing to work with the Government and our partners across industry on this important long-term initiative for the New Zealand minerals sector, including by welcoming Minister Jones at our New Zealand Conference in August.

If AusIMM can be of any further assistance, please contact me directly at

Privacy of natural
persons

Yours sincerely



Harrison Turner
Senior Manager, Government Relations
AusIMM

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Are the strategic pillars of the Strategy suitable or is there more we need to consider?

Professional best practice and technical excellence will enable the minerals industry to grow in a responsible manner and should be acknowledged as a strategic pillar in the Strategy.

AusIMM supports the strategic pillars outlined in the Draft Strategy, which align with our core advocacy priorities: best practice; professional recognition and mobility; diversity, equality and inclusion; the future of the sector; community and environmental sustainability; and health and safety.

We recommend the Government recognise the crucial role of skills, professionalism, and industry capability by adding a fourth pillar to the Minerals Strategy: “Professional and technical excellence.”

A reputation for professional and technical excellence is fundamental to building community support, attracting investment, and ensuring future access to the skilled workforce needed for industry growth. Adding this fourth pillar will demonstrate the Government’s commitment to delivering greater economic benefits through an expanded and diversified sector, and doing so in a responsible manner.

A future workforce strategy, on which we expand below, would be a key action under this pillar.

Are the key actions the right ones to deliver on our strategic pillars, and are they ambitious enough? What else might we need to consider?

AusIMM supports each of the actions outlined in the Draft Strategy. Plans to complete a Critical Minerals List and undertake a detailed stock take of New Zealand’s known mineral potential should be progressed urgently – both will be vital to attract investment in an already highly competitive market.

Prioritise completion of a New Zealand Critical Minerals list to attract investment.

A Critical Minerals List can provide a valuable signal to industry, investors, and communities regarding the minerals prioritised for exploration and development in New Zealand.

Much of the analysis that goes into developing a critical minerals list – questions of supply chain vulnerability and applications in energy, defence and advanced manufacturing (for example) – has already been undertaken by likeminded governments in Australia, Canada and the United States. AusIMM recommend an expedited process to develop the New Zealand list, taking these existing lists as a starting point.

The core function of an NZ list will be to attract investment and provide a signal for investors, industry, trading partners and the community about where Government support is focused. To an extent, the question of what support is offered involves questions of industry, trade and taxation policy that are beyond the scope of AusIMM’s submission.

However, AusIMM recommend that the New Zealand Government expedite investments in geological mapping to help identify and better define the nations mineral endowment and prospectivity – including critical minerals as defined in the New Zealand Critical Minerals List.

Invest in comprehensive, pre-competitive geoscience as a cost-effective means for government to boost industry and provide certainty for communities.

Data generated by the Geological Survey of New Zealand has been fundamental to the development and success of the nation’s mining sector to date. The agency and its capability should be placed at the centre of plans for an expanded and diversified future sector.

AusIMM recommends the Government invest in comprehensive geological mapping. Data should be freely available and easily accessible, to ensure explorers can efficiently identify and access information, while providing communities and governments with the transparency needed for effective engagement and decision-making.

Government might consider modelling a long-term plan for New Zealand Geoscience on the following initiatives from major mining jurisdictions around the world:

- Geoscience Australia's Resourcing Australia's Prosperity Initiative seeks to map all of Australia's groundwater systems and resource endowments over coming decades, including to identify potential new deposits of critical minerals. Importantly, the program involves direct engagement with regional communities, landholders and First Nations groups. As this program is itself in the early design, there is substantial opportunity for New Zealand and Australian geoscience agencies to gain mutual value by aligning activities and investments.
- The United States 'Landsat Next' satellite program provides an extensive range of earth observation data, with broad application across mining, land, agriculture, fisheries and water administration. Administered by NASA and the US Geological Survey, the program has support from and offers data to both Australian and New Zealand agencies. AusIMM particularly supports the extension of collaborative work with the Victoria University of Wellington, which has hosted researchers associated with the Landsat initiative.

Focus on the future workforce to ensure New Zealand has access to the skilled, ethical professionals that its resources sector needs.

AusIMM recommends developing a future workforce plan as part of the Minerals Strategy. New Zealand requires a forward-looking plan to connect people with the opportunities that exist in mining, and a sequenced, content-rich curriculum to equip people with the skills needed to deliver enduring community and economic benefit through the industry.

An expanded minerals sector will drive demand for professionals with expertise across a range of disciplines, including in engineering, earth science and geology. Many of these core technical skillsets also have application in fields increasingly essential to New Zealand, including construction, urban planning and geohazard management. Developing minerals skills can deliver broad industry and environmental benefit for New Zealand.

Initial steps towards developing a resources workforce strategy should include:

- Forecasting skills needs and gaps in the New Zealand minerals sector.
- Collaborating with industry organisations like AusIMM to enhance existing career promotion and education initiatives, including scholarships, bursaries and university roadshows.
- Engaging universities, training providers and professional bodies to develop a model for career-long, world-class and financially sustainable minerals education.
- Supporting programs that offer field-based learning opportunities for secondary and tertiary students, particularly those living, studying and working in current minerals regions.
- Investigating the perceptions and attitudes of students towards mining, to determine how best to attract people to careers in the industry.

Previous AusIMM research on Australian youth attitudes towards mining careers offer several insights that can be tested in New Zealand. We found:

- Parents and teachers are the greatest influences on career preferences.
- Early exposure to the industry during tertiary studies is crucial for attracting students.
- Students' career certainly fluctuates; early tertiary years are the prime time to embed an intention to pursue mining careers.
- Mining's contribution to the national economy and its role in clean energy technologies are strong motivators for students.

AusIMM would welcome the opportunity to collaborate on similar research in New Zealand.

Are there opportunities for our minerals sector we haven't considered?

Demonstrated environmental, social and governance (ESG) capability will underwrite support for a streamlined regulatory process.

AusIMM support the Government's intention to implement a more efficient regulatory process for mining activities in New Zealand. A streamlined process can maximise benefits for all stakeholders, including project proponents, landholders, local communities and the broader community.

This will be best achieved where the regulatory process balances economic, environmental and social considerations, and where all parties can have in its fair and proper administration.

Building and maintaining trust with communities is essential for the success of New Zealand's minerals sector. Resources professionals have been at the forefront of a shift in practice from “telling the story” of mining to demonstrating tangible ESG performance.

Our key insight is that the ability to maintain trust in regulatory processes and decision-making depends on the expertise and credibility of the people advising throughout. AusIMM is exercising leadership in this space through various ‘levers’, including our:

- Social Responsibility Framework, which outlines the core responsibilities and expectations for professionals working in all roles and disciplines.
- Technical codes such as JORC, which AusIMM and our kindred bodies are currently updating to account for ESG factors.
- Chartered Professional Program, which provides assurance of the professional skills and competencies of specialists working in environmental, social performance and other fields.
- Professional development offering including a Professional Certificate in ESG and Social Responsibility and Operationalising ESG Course.
- Crucially, our partnerships with government and other stakeholders to build ESG capability.

We recommend the New Zealand Government incorporate the following actions into the strategy:

- Undertake a baseline assessment of the industry's ESG skill set: Identify existing strengths and weaknesses in ESG knowledge to inform targeted capacity-building initiatives.
- Invest in ESG skills development: Provide resources and support to upskill the minerals workforce on ESG principles and practices, along with high-quality information resources to build community engagement capacity.
- Promote transparency and reporting: Encourage companies to disclose ESG performance data and engage in meaningful dialogue with stakeholders, using open-access information to promote transparency and trust.
- Collaborate with industry and professional bodies: Leverage the expertise and resources of organisations like AusIMM to develop and implement effective ESG strategies, potentially including standardised frameworks for social impact assessments.
- Incentivise ESG leadership: Recognise and reward companies that demonstrate exemplary ESG performance, for example industry excellence award program.

By prioritising ESG and focusing on capacity building, information sharing, and collaboration, New Zealand’s minerals professionals can help to build support and maintain confidence in a fit-for-purpose regulatory framework.

Are there any other things we have missed that we should include, or things we should not include?

Leverage international events to attract investment into the New Zealand minerals sector.

AusIMM offer a platform for government to engage with and reach global leaders from across the minerals supply chain. We have been the leading provider of technical conference and leadership events in this sector for more than forty years, attracting more than 10,000 delegates from across our events annually.

We would welcome further engagement with the Government on opportunities to leverage our events to showcase the capabilities, expertise and investment opportunities that exist in the New Zealand minerals sector.