

SUBMISSION TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE ON PRIMARY INDUSTRIES

INQUIRY INTO FACTORS SHAPING SOCIAL LICENCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
OUTCOMES IN CRITICAL MINERALS PROJECTS ACROSS AUSTRALIA

**SUBMITTED BY ALPHA HPA LIMITED
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INTRODUCTION

Alpha HPA Limited welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Committee's inquiry into social licence and economic development outcomes in critical minerals projects.

Alpha HPA is an Australian advanced materials company currently constructing its High Purity Alumina processing facility in Gladstone, Queensland. Our project will supply ultra-high purity alumina products into global supply chains supporting electric vehicles, lithium-ion batteries, LED lighting, semiconductors, pharmaceuticals and advanced ceramics.

As a downstream processor rather than a mining operation, Alpha HPA represents a critical part of Australia's ambition to move beyond extraction and into value adding, advanced manufacturing and supply chain integration. Our experience developing and constructing a first of kind project in a regional industrial centre provides practical insight into what supports strong social licence and sustainable economic development outcomes.

SOCIAL LICENCE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Social licence is built on transparency, long term presence and demonstrated local benefit.

In Gladstone, we have focused on:

- Early and ongoing engagement with local government, community leaders and industry groups
- Clear communication about what our project is and is not, particularly in distinguishing advanced materials processing from traditional mining and refining operations
- Visible participation in regional initiatives, events and partnerships
- Investment in local employment and supplier engagement during construction

For new critical minerals projects, certainty and consistency in regulatory frameworks are essential to maintaining community trust and investor confidence.

Communities need assurance that environmental approvals are rigorous, science based and proportionate to the actual risk profile of the project. Assessment frameworks should be aligned with comparable operations in established industrial regions and grounded in current environmental science.



At the same time, proponents require confidence that permitting pathways are commercially realistic. In established industrial precincts such as Gladstone, approval settings should reflect the presence of existing industry, shared infrastructure and established environmental management systems. Regulatory conditions should drive continuous environmental improvement while remaining proportionate and achievable, rather than introducing uncertainty that undermines project viability.

For example, water quality and environmental authority permits should be based on a clear understanding of the proposed activity, the nature of discharge streams and the likely constituents involved. Assessment should consider site specific context, including receiving environments and existing industrial baselines. Where broader environmental sensitivities exist, such as concerns relating to the Great Barrier Reef and marine water quality, limits should be informed by credible science, measured risk and demonstrated impact pathways.

A permitting framework that is rigorous, science based and pragmatic will support both environmental protection and sustainable industrial development.

We recommend:

1. Greater coordination between Commonwealth and State approval processes to reduce duplication while maintaining environmental integrity
2. Clearer communication to the public about the difference between upstream mining and downstream advanced processing
3. Structured support for companies engaging Traditional Owners early in project design and development

Social licence is strongest when communities can see tangible economic and workforce outcomes.

CONTRIBUTION TO REGIONAL AND NATIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Critical minerals projects should not be assessed solely on extraction volumes. Their strategic value lies in where they sit within global supply chains. In our case, there is not a finite resource, unlike other critical mineral projects with a mine life. Although this might be the exception right now, as we continue to move down the supply chain in various sectors this point will become more common. This means that contribution on this has to be thought about in a different way.

Alpha HPA's project contributes to:

- Diversification of Gladstone's industrial base beyond traditional energy and bulk commodities
- High value export earnings from advanced manufactured materials at low volumes. For example, the same export value for 10ktpa of high purity alumina (HPA) is equivalent to shipping over 600ktpa of smelter grade alumina.
- Integration into global battery, including direct lithium extraction, and semiconductor supply chains
- Support for Australia's broader critical minerals and energy transition strategy

Downstream processing creates greater economic multipliers than extraction alone. It drives skilled employment, technical capability development and long-term industrial capability.

To strengthen economic development outcomes, we recommend:

1. Access to affordable, reliable renewable energy to compete internationally
2. Targeted support for midstream and downstream processing projects that anchor supply chains in Australia
3. Investment in enabling infrastructure in established industrial regions such as Gladstone
4. Recognition of advanced materials processing as advanced manufacturing in policy settings and funding programs



If Australia is to compete internationally, policy must reflect the reality that many peer jurisdictions offer significant financial and regulatory support to secure critical minerals processing capacity.

WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION, SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT PATHWAYS

Access to skilled labour is one of the most significant constraints facing new industrial projects in regional Australia.

Alpha HPA's construction and future operations require:

- Chemical and process engineers
- Technical managers
- Process technicians
- Instrumentation and electrical specialists
- Laboratory and quality control professionals
- Maintenance and reliability personnel

Regional workforce development must be aligned with the specific technical needs of critical minerals processing, not only mining.

We recommend:

1. Expanded partnerships between industry, TAFEs and universities in regional centres
2. Support for industry led training pathways tied directly to operational facilities
3. Incentives to attract skilled professionals to regional areas
4. Stronger programs supporting Indigenous workforce participation linked to long term careers rather than short term construction roles
5. Examination of the role of short-term construction labour to build manufacturing capability at competitive rates

Critical minerals processing presents an opportunity to create high skill, high wage careers in regional Australia. To achieve this, workforce programs must be proactive rather than reactive.

ROLE OF GOVERNMENTS AND COORDINATION ACROSS JURISDICTIONS

The global race to secure critical minerals supply chains is accelerating. Australia competes directly with jurisdictions that offer coordinated policy, streamlined approvals and substantial financial incentives.

Improved coordination between the Commonwealth and States should focus on:

- Clear, nationally aligned definitions of critical minerals processing and advanced manufacturing
- Faster and more predictable environmental and planning pathways
- Strategic infrastructure investment in designated industrial hubs
- Access to competitive financing mechanisms for capital intensive projects

Industrial precincts such as Gladstone demonstrate the value of clustering. Shared infrastructure, existing industrial capability and community familiarity with heavy industry all strengthen project viability and social acceptance.

A nationally coordinated critical minerals strategy should leverage these established industrial regions rather than dispersing effort.



CONCLUSION

Australia has a generational opportunity to build sovereign capability in critical minerals processing and advanced materials manufacturing.

Social licence will not be achieved through communication alone. It will be earned through visible regional benefits, stable policy settings, environmental integrity and meaningful workforce development.

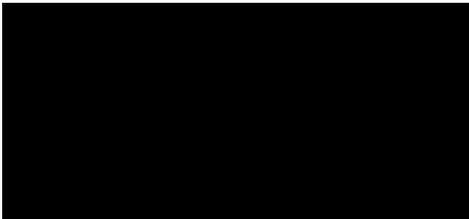
Alpha HPA's experience in Gladstone highlights the importance of:

- Policy certainty
- Workforce alignment
- Infrastructure readiness
- Clear differentiation between extraction and advanced processing
- Strategic government coordination

With the right settings, critical minerals projects can deliver durable regional prosperity while strengthening Australia's position in global supply chains.

Alpha HPA appreciates the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry and would welcome the opportunity to provide further information if required.

Yours sincerely,



Rob Williamson
Managing Director
Alpha HPA Limited

