



LAKE KEPWARI – COLLIE

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

TRANSITIONING A MINE ASSET AND A LOCAL COMMUNITY

Fiona Haslam McKenzie, Program 1 lead, CRC TiME

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- Mission
- Vision
- Why CRC TiME exists
- Rethinking the model of mine closure

Mission

Bring together diverse stakeholders to help reimagine and dramatically transform Australian mine closure outcomes.

Vision

Closure as a valued cornerstone for post-mine economies and the mining industry, building enduring benefit for all Australians.

Why CRC TiME exists ...

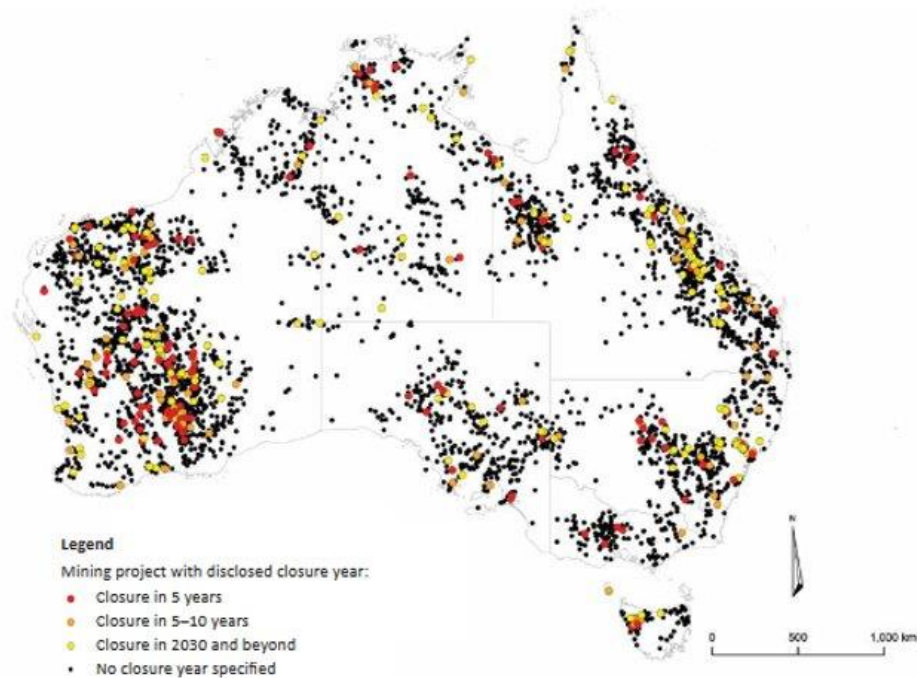
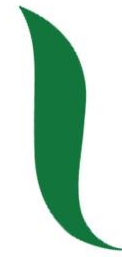


FIGURE 1. Planned mine closures

Source: Sustainable Minerals Institute, The University of Queensland, from the S&P Global Market Intelligence database

- 50% of Australia's existing mines are expected to close over next 25 years
- While new operations may replace closing ones, each closure creates huge economic and social headwinds
- Mine closure traditionally seen as an end – not through prism of what's next
- Mines often have a significant role in communities:
 - **Socially** – local identity, central point of connection, training, health and wellbeing
 - **Economically** – highly paid, skilled employment, largely fulltime, land use agreement revenue, offset transportation costs, rates base, local and Indigenous supply and contracting,
- Mine regulation is applied at a site scale - but communities experience impact at a regional scale
 - Effects extend and interact beyond what mines can control
 - Industry, governments, regulators, Traditional Owner and regional organisations, businesses have different roles and responsibilities
 - Effects not caused by the mine often attributed to it.



Re-thinking the model of mine closure

- Concept of **transition** in contrast to the concept of **closure**:
 - *'Closure' is defined in regulation, 'transition' is not*
 - *There is a general agreement on some key elements e.g. 'safe, stable and non-polluting'.*
 - *Concepts such as repurposing of mine assets or landforms and social transitions in communities are largely absent*
 - *Lack of clear statutory expression of goals pertaining to mine closure and where present, focus on biophysical risk*
- Economic transitions are difficult, even when planned
- Relies on addressing information asymmetry
- Disconnected mine closure and regional development policy
- Liability is seen as a cost to industry, not an opportunity
- Understanding personal grief and loss through transitions



- Collie is Western Australia's only coal community, producing black coal for domestic and industrial power generation
- Located 200km south of Perth, 60 km east of Bunbury in a lush valley, surrounded by hills and state forest
- Population is 7,550 with majority of residents involved in coal mining and power generation – although this is changing
- Two coal mining companies – both of which have experienced financial and IR difficulties
- Three power stations
- Highly unionised workforce



- Underground mining gave way to open pits in the 1990s
- Numerous mines and pits were exhausted and closed
- Consistent pressure from the community to transform mine voids to recreational lakes
- Regulators and mining companies resisted – risk averse



The transition from pit W05B to Lake Kepwari

- Lake Kepwari took 25 years:
 - technical and supporting studies (often conflicting)
 - consistent monitoring and reporting
- to provide an evidence-based successful transition of highly degraded mining land to a safe, usable, aesthetically attractive water feature that meets stakeholder-agreed closure objectives.
- **The science was important but nature, people-power and political-power made it happen**





Collie's Just Transition plan

- The premier of Western Australia made a commitment to carefully plan and co-ordinate Collie's transition beyond mining
- Collie's Just Transition Plan announced in 2020, with a committed working group – mending toxic relationships, constituted of:
 - Senior bureaucrats
 - Mining company representatives
 - Trade union representatives
 - Local government
 - Community representatives
- Government brought \$600M to the Plan



What does Collie's Just Transition plan look like?

- It has political status – part of the Department of Premier and Cabinet. The Premier attends meetings
- It's not just about mines and pits – Collie streetscape improvement, arts and cultural enterprises
- Government has targeted international and local new industry to Collie, many of which employ mine workers
- The Just Transition Plan is focused on training and new energy – a green steel mill, battery technologies and backroom government services
- Trade union representatives have been strong advocates



Critical lessons

- Values have value
 - The concepts of 'value' and 'values' are central to the transition of mine closure to land and asset re-purposing. There are likely to be a range of values in different contexts
- People and place count
 - The role of place is crucial: the range of values varies within and between regions
 - To understand values we need strong relationships, particularly with Traditional Owners and local residents
- Government commitment makes a difference

The importance of framing: what are you transitioning *into*, as opposed to *out of*?

- To be viable, options need to be deeply discussed:
 - **Feasible** (economically, environmentally, socially)
 - **Desirable** (aligned with regional values, identity)
 - **Possible** (technically achievable and safe).
- Transfer occurs when the business case meets acceptability measures to all parties





Commissioned artwork by Acacia Collard

THANK YOU

We acknowledge the traditional custodians across all the lands on which we live and work, and we pay our respects to Elders both past and present

We sincerely thank them for the work they do with us

Professor Fiona Haslam McKenzie

Program 1 (socio-economic) lead

Fiona.Haslam-mckenzie@crctime.com.au

www.crctime.com.au