The role of Government in securing project approvals for critical minerals

D Falconer1, P Freeman2 and E Campbell3

1. Associate Environmental Planner, EMM Consulting Pty Ltd, Brisbane QLD 4000. Email: dfalconer@emmconsulting.com.au

2. Associate Director, EMM Consulting Pty Ltd, Brisbane QLD 4000. Email: pfreeman@emmconsulting.com.au

3. Senior Environmental Engineer, EMM Consulting Pty Ltd, Brisbane QLD 4000. Email: ecampbell@emmconsulting.com.au

# ABSTRACT

Critical minerals are essential for the global transition to a low carbon economy. The need for Government to facilitate the switch to a low carbon economy is clear. The role of Government in facilitating mining and processing approvals for critical minerals needs to be clearer.

The role of Government as threefold. Firstly, the planning system needs to be innovative, to recognise this rapid change, to attract investment and cut red-tape. Secondly, Government needs to facilitate the approval process to ensure decisions are strong, fair and quick. Thirdly, Government must ensure that regulation is robust, is workable and results in the best practicable environmental, social and economic outcomes.

Central to delivering these roles is a process of education, design, evaluation and continual evolution to adjust regulatory requirements and process as projects, stakeholder and proponent expectations evolve. Expectations are not static; both Government and industry recognise negotiation and compromise will be needed to transition to a low carbon economy with haste.

To assist government in its roles, industry needs to be smart and understand what is required to receive Government approvals and to operate with a social licence. Again, expectations change; industry must put forward proposals which are developable, sympathetic, adaptable, incorporate sustainable practices and champion a ‘going beyond compliance’ ethos.

Both sides want the same outcomes. To realise the benefits of a low carbon future, collaboration is key. Communication needs to be effective. Understanding regulation and how it can work for the development is necessary.

At a project scale, early and meaningful engagement with regulators and key decision makers sets expectations and partnerships are formed. Collaboration not only has the power to deliver a single project, but can facilitate innovative and futuristic outcomes that align with Government-mandated sustainability targets. Strategic alignment with regulators not only propels the journey towards sustainable mining practices but also lends momentum and credibility to the cause.