



A Snapshot of the Kimberley Resources Industry

AS OF FEBRUARY 2023

The Western Australian Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety (DMIRS) regulates the mining, oil and gas industries in WA.

DMIRS regulates access to land for resource exploration and production, and enforces compliance with environmental, health and safety standards. This includes dangerous goods in the community such as the transport and storage of fuel, explosives and fireworks.

The department's Geological Survey of Western Australia (GSWA) gathers new geological and resource information across the State to gain a greater understanding of areas such as the Kimberley. GSWA field scientists interpret the geology and produce maps and information for use by industry and the community. This includes special geotourism products for people with an interest in geology and landscape development.

WA produces more than 50 different minerals and has 129 principal mining projects which are high value and export-oriented.

Our State also has 20 principal petroleum projects producing oil, gas and condensate from 51 fields onshore and in Commonwealth waters around WA. These projects have associated processing plants for LNG exports and domestic gas sales.

Western Australia in 2021–22

- WA's resources sector delivered record resource sales valued at \$231 billion – up \$21 billion on 2020–21. Iron ore remained the most significant commodity.
- Minerals made up 78 per cent of this production value oil, gas and condensate made up 22 per cent (double the previous year).
- WA's minerals and energy exports, worth \$226 billion, made up 94 per cent of all WA merchandise exports. WA's resources exports have more than doubled over the past five years.
- Iron ore accounted for 76 per cent of mineral sales and 59 per cent of total mineral and petroleum sales. Gold, spodumene concentrate (for lithium), copper, mineral sands and cobalt all returned record sales.
- In 2021–22, the WA Government received a record \$12.8 billion in royalties, up \$1.8 billion from 2020–21. Royalties are the 'purchase price' the State Government charges companies for the resources they extract.
- WA's resource industry employed an average of 157,704 on-site personnel during 2021–22. Up to three times this number are employed in service companies that support resource companies.
- Mining tenements cover 28 per cent of the State and around 10.5 per cent of the shires in the Kimberley shire.
- In 2021–22, WA accounted for 64 per cent of Australia's total mineral exploration, which employed more than 4,600 people and was worth \$2.5 billion.



Value of resource production in the Kimberley by shire in 2021–22 was \$469 million (the Pilbara was \$138 billion):

- Halls Creek: \$232 million.
- Derby-West Kimberley: \$182 million.
- Wyndham-East Kimberley: \$45 million.
- Broome: \$10 million.

Value of resource production in the Kimberley by commodity in 2021–22:

- Iron ore, nickel and cobalt: \$328 million.
- Diamonds, gold and silver: \$74 million.
- Copper and rare earth oxide: \$28 million.
- Petroleum: \$26 million.
- Construction materials, dimension stone and limesand, limestone and dolomite: \$13 million.

Kimberley Resource Projects

Existing projects

- **Ungani oilfield, halfway between Broome and Derby:**
 - The project is operated by Buru Energy. Commercial oil production started in July 2015 and has been trucked to Wyndham Port.
- **Koolan Island, around 130km north of Derby in Yampi Sound:**
 - Mining of high-grade iron ore was undertaken by BHP from the mid-1960s and more recently by other companies. Since 2007 it has been operated by Mt Gibson Iron.
- **Cockatoo Island, around 130km north of Derby in Yampi Sound:**
 - Cockatoo Island produced high-grade iron ore for BHP from the early 1950s and more recently by other companies. There is no active mining currently taking place.
- **Nicholson's Find project on Lamboo Station, around 40km south west of Halls Creek:**
 - Operated by Halls Creek Mining, Nicholson's Find produces gold. Workers commute daily from Halls Creek.
- **Savannah Nickel Mine, around 110km north of Halls Creek:**
 - A nickel/copper/cobalt-producing mine operated by Panoramic Resources, with product trucked to Wyndham Port.

- **Brown's Range project, around 170km south east of Halls Creek:**
 - Northern Minerals has completed an initial three-year pilot plant project and is now assessing the feasibility of a larger commercial-scale development. The project aims to produce the heavy rare earth element dysprosium, which is used in renewable energy and high-end technology applications.
- **Ridges Mine, around 110km south west of Kununurra:**
 - The Kimberley Metals Group's Ridges iron ore mine, which trucked ore to Wyndham for shipping, is not currently operating, with the company planning to develop the nearby Matsu deposit.
- **Argyle Diamond Mine, around 120km south west of Kununurra:**
 - Operated by Rio Tinto, the mine closed in November 2022 and is undergoing decommissioning and rehabilitation.

Projects Under Construction

- **Thunderbird mineral sands project (halfway between Broome and Derby).**
 - Kimberley Mineral Sands anticipates the project will be operational by early 2024. Site construction is reported to be 75 per cent complete, and the company has constructed a 352 person accommodation village. Mineral sands are used in paints and plastics, ceramics, sunscreen, toothpaste, artificial joints and welding rods.

Exploration helps discover the mines of the future, which will be needed to support the global transition to a low-carbon future. In the Kimberley, exploration companies are seeking a range of minerals that are used in advanced technologies, as well as traditional materials such as copper, nickel, cobalt, zinc, vanadium and graphite that are also used in renewable energy applications.

Prospecting is popular in some areas of the Kimberley. Guidelines about obtaining the required authority and how to conduct prospecting can be obtained from DMIRS' website. This includes safety information regarding the dangers of old mine workings and the importance of carrying a Personal Locator Beacon.

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