25 June 2026

To: Primary Industries and Resources Committee

Email: pirc@parliament.qld.gov.au

RE: State Development and Public Works Organisation (Critical Minerals) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2026

Introductory Remarks

The Association of Mining and Exploration Companies (AMEC) appreciates the opportunity to make a submission on the State Development and Public Works Organisation (Critical Minerals) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2026 (SDPWO Act). AMEC Members drive mineral discovery, discover the long-term pipeline of resource development, and rely heavily on efficient regulatory frameworks. It is hoped that this legislation will enable AMEC members to do these things much more effectively than they have to date.

About AMEC

AMEC is a national peak industry body representing over 550 mineral exploration and mining companies across Australia, with 80 having operations based primarily in Queensland. Our members are mineral explorers, emerging miners, producers, and a wide range of businesses working in and for the industry.

Mineral exploration and mining make a critical contribution to Australia's economy, directly employing over 314,000 people. In 2025-26, the industry generated $383 billion in resource exports, invested $3.95 billion in exploration expenditure to discover future mines (2025), and collectively paid over $59.4 billion in royalties and taxes.

AMEC's members explore for, develop and produce minerals including antimony, bauxite, coal, cobalt, copper, gold, graphite, lead, lithium, manganese, mineral sands (such as silica), molybdenum, nickel, phosphate, potash, rare earths, silver, tungsten, uranium, vanadium and zinc, across Queensland.

Submission Summary

AMEC supports the Queensland Government's objective to:

- Establish new powers to improve existing functions for projects of significance to the state
- modernise the SDPWO Act infrastructure and land use planning and coordination frameworks for the resources and heavy industrial sectors
- improve, clarify and streamline existing processes and powers within the Act to ensure efficient and effective administration

AMEC supports the important reforms that will:

- streamline approvals and reduce in duplication
- improve Infrastructure coordination and regional development
- strengthen facilitation of strategically significant projects
- enable flexible cost and fee arrangements
- introduce modification orders

However, AMEC has concerns regarding:

- removal and limitation of appeal rights
- risk of a “two-tier system”
- infrastructure cost allocation
- the practical impact on Land Court processes

AMEC supports the intent of the Bill, but recommends targeted amendments to ensure:

- clearer criteria for State Strategic Project designation
- appeal rights consideration
- greater clarity on infrastructure cost allocation
- fairness across all project sizes

Areas of support

Streamlining of approvals and reduction in duplication

AMEC strongly supports the Bill’s measures to streamline approvals and reduce duplication across Queensland’s regulatory framework. The integration of assessment pathways under the SDPWO Act with related approvals under the Regional Planning Interests Act (RPI Act) and Transport Infrastructure Act (TI Act) represents a significant step toward a more efficient system. This reform addresses longstanding industry concerns about overlapping approvals, inconsistent conditions, and extended timeframes stemming from fragmented, duplicative decision-making processes.

Duplication and misalignment between regulatory regimes have created uncertainty and delays that impact investment confidence. By recognising that the environmental impact assessment process undertaken by the Coordinator-General satisfies elements of other statutory approvals, the Bill moves toward a more coordinated and streamlined approach. This has the potential to reduce assessment timelines while maintaining appropriate environmental and planning safeguards.

Infrastructure coordination and regional development

AMEC supports introducing development investigations and infrastructure coordination plans as a key structural reform in the Bill and helps address the “enabling long-term infrastructure” in AMEC's 2025/2026 Queensland Budget Submission[1]. These mechanisms recognise that access to enabling infrastructure for roads, rails, ports, smelters, acid supply, water supply, and power supply remains one of the most significant barriers to project development, especially in regional and remote areas.

The ability for government to take a strategic, multi-project approach to infrastructure planning represents a shift away from the traditional model where individual proponents are responsible for independently delivering all required infrastructure. This is particularly important for junior and mid-tier companies, which often lack the capital to fund large-scale infrastructure on their own. Through coordinated planning and delivery, there is an opportunity to unlock projects that would otherwise remain uneconomic and to enable more efficient use of shared infrastructure assets.

In addition, the infrastructure coordination framework aligns with broader policy objectives relating to regional development and the establishment of industrial and processing hubs. By planning infrastructure at a regional level and linking it to multiple projects and industries, the Bill supports the development of integrated value chains, including those associated with critical minerals and downstream processing.

Strengthened facilitation of strategically significant projects

AMEC supports strengthening government facilitation powers for projects of State significance, recognising the increasingly competitive global investment environment in critical minerals and related industries. The introduction of the State Strategic Project(SPP) framework provides the government with tools to proactively enable projects that are of major economic and strategic importance to Queensland.

By allowing the government to coordinate across agencies, resolve regulatory bottlenecks, and prioritise key projects, the framework has the potential to improve project delivery outcomes and reduce delays associated with complex approvals processes for critical minerals projects.

According to law firm Mallesons, "While SSPs continue to access the existing facilitation tools available to "prescribed projects" under the SDPWO Act, the designation unlocks a new suite of powers. These include State significance notices, modification orders, expanded land access arrangements, strategic infrastructure easements and, in certain circumstances, compulsory acquisition powers."[2]

AMEC supports the rationale for the government to take a more active facilitation role, particularly for projects with the capacity to deliver significant economic benefits and to support the development of new supply chains and increase regional resilience. When applied

[1] AMEC Queensland 2026 - 2027 Budget submission

[2] Queensland goes all in on critical minerals: Key changes under the SDPWO Amendment Bill 2026

appropriately, these powers can help ensure that Queensland remains competitive with other jurisdictions that are actively seeking to attract investment in similar sectors.

Flexible cost and fee arrangements

AMEC supports the inclusion of provisions that provide flexibility in cost recovery and fee arrangements, including the ability to waive development application fees within State Development Areas in appropriate circumstances. These measures recognise the importance of reducing upfront financial barriers for proponents, particularly during early-stage project development when access to capital may be constrained.

The ability to apply fees more targeted and strategically provides the government with an additional tool to support priority projects and encourage investment. This is especially relevant for exploration and emerging development projects, which often operate within tight financial constraints and are highly sensitive to upfront costs.

While the Bill maintains the principle of appropriate cost recovery for government services, the introduction of greater flexibility enables a more nuanced approach that can better align with broader policy objectives. AMEC considers that this approach strikes an appropriate balance between supporting investment and maintaining fiscal responsibility, provided that it is applied transparently and consistently.

Modification order power

AMEC acknowledges the policy intent behind the introduction of modification orders, namely, to provide a mechanism to address duplication, regulatory conflicts, and unforeseen barriers that may delay strategically important projects.

The introduction of the modification order power is a pragmatic and appropriate mechanism to address regulatory barriers that may otherwise delay projects of significant economic importance. While the power is broad, it is accompanied by comprehensive safeguards that provide assurance it will be used in a targeted and responsible manner. Notably, modification orders are limited to projects that have already met the high threshold of being declared State Strategic Projects, ensuring that their application is confined to a small number of developments of substantial public benefit. The framework also requires Ministerial satisfaction that the order is necessary and in the interests of the State, supported by defined criteria, consultation with relevant Ministers and affected stakeholders, and consideration of the objectives of the legislation being modified. Importantly, the power cannot be used to remove the need for key approvals, undermine environmental protections, or affect the rights and interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, thereby preserving the integrity of core regulatory safeguards. Parliamentary oversight through tabling and disallowance further reinforces accountability. Taken together, these constraints ensure that the modification order power serves as a carefully controlled tool for resolving regulatory inefficiencies.

Areas of concern

Removal and limitation of appeal rights

AMEC has concerns regarding the proposed removal and limitation of appeal rights across several key decision-making mechanisms in the Bill. For example, if a renewable energy project were declared a State Significant Project and located on top of a Critical Mineral Resource, our concern is that the resource tenure holder wouldn't have the right to appeal to present the case for the resource project.

The following is a quote from AMEC's submission on the Draft Renewable Energy Framework from February 2025, and it is still relevant now "If the renewable infrastructure is built on mineral-prospective land, the state will lose the opportunity to supply the raw materials for renewable projects and the associated royalties. Renewable energy projects do not provide royalties so this revenue stream will be lost. There is a brief window of construction jobs that stimulate short-term economic activity and the supply of electricity at retail cost, unlike mining projects, which have the potential to generate long-term employment opportunities and deliver significant positive benefits to communities, such as infrastructure development, skills training, and local business growth, renewable projects do not generally require significant numbers of on-site employees. Mining projects often contribute to regional economic stability by creating jobs that span the lifespan of the operation, fostering partnerships with local suppliers, and funding community programs. Additionally, they play a critical role in enhancing social and economic development by supporting health, education, and environmental initiatives in the surrounding areas."[3]

While AMEC recognises the Government's intention to reduce litigation delays from 'anti-development' proponents, this could also impact 'pro-development' proponents should there be a change of government policy objectives. AMEC considers that targeted merits review or alternative procedural safeguards should be retained for decisions that materially affect project viability.

Risk of a "two-tier system"

AMEC is concerned that the State Strategic Project framework, while appropriate for large-scale developments, may give rise to a two-tier regulatory system that disproportionately favours major projects. The concentration of facilitation tools and regulatory flexibility at the top end of the project spectrum may inadvertently disadvantage junior and mid-tier companies that do not meet the threshold for SSP declaration. These reforms will lead to a fast track for bigger companies and a slow track for smaller companies.

This is a particularly important issue given that smaller exploration companies are responsible for the majority of mineral discoveries and play a critical role in maintaining the long-term pipeline of resource development. If these companies are subject to comparatively slower or more complex approval pathways, it may affect their ability to attract funding and progress

[33] Draft Renewables Regulatory Framework, AMEC, 2025

projects. AMEC therefore emphasises the importance of ensuring that the benefits of regulatory reform are accessible across the full spectrum of the industry. Mechanisms should be considered to ensure that smaller projects are not excluded from the benefits of coordination or disadvantaged by the new framework.

Infrastructure cost allocation

While AMEC strongly supports the introduction of infrastructure coordination plans, there remains uncertainty about how the associated costs will be allocated among proponents, the government, and other stakeholders. The Bill provides a framework for coordinating infrastructure delivery but stops short of clearly defining the financial responsibilities associated with that coordination.

For junior and mid-tier companies, clarity on cost allocation is essential, as infrastructure costs can represent a significant proportion of total project expenditure. There is a risk that smaller proponents could be required to contribute to shared or regional infrastructure in ways that do not reflect their proportional impact or benefit. AMEC considers that clear principles should be established to guide cost allocation and transparency around how charges are calculated and applied. This will help ensure that infrastructure coordination supports, rather than constrains, project development.

Practical impact on Land Court processes

AMEC notes that the Bill does not alter the statutory framework for Mining Lease and Environmental Authority applications, including the associated Land Court objection processes. These processes remain an important component of Queensland's regulatory system and provide a mechanism for independent consideration of objections and competing interests.

At a legal level, the objection process remains unchanged. Objectors can still lodge submissions, hearings will still occur, and the Land Court will continue to provide independent recommendations to the relevant decision-maker. However, SSP designation introduces a stronger policy overlay, whereby a project is formally recognised as being of high strategic importance to the State. This recognition may alter the context in which both evidence and recommendations are considered.

The practical impact of the SSP framework may also extend to the way projects are valued and assessed in Land Court proceedings, even when the formal legal process remains unchanged. An SSP designation signals that a project is of significant strategic and economic importance to the State, which can influence expectations regarding project deliverability and the likelihood of approval. In valuation terms, whether for compensation, land access negotiations, or broader economic assessment, this designation may implicitly elevate the perceived certainty of project progression and long-term viability. As a result, there is a potential for greater weighting to be placed on projected economic benefits and future development potential, particularly where the State interest is clearly articulated. While the

Land Court continues to conduct an independent assessment, the broader policy context created by the SSP designation may shape the evidentiary framing and assumptions underpinning valuation inputs, leading to outcomes that place greater emphasis on strategic economic value than on a purely balanced consideration of competing risks and impacts.

While SSP designation does not formally alter the valuation framework applied by the Land Court, it may practically influence assumptions and weightings, resulting in greater emphasis on project certainty and strategic economic value in determining outcomes.

State Strategic Project Criteria

AMEC supports the introduction of a State Strategic Project designation to facilitate projects of exceptional importance to Queensland. However, the criteria for determining strategic significance, while intentionally flexible, are currently broad and may create uncertainty for proponents seeking to understand whether their projects are likely to qualify.

The Bill emphasises factors such as economic significance, alignment with priority sectors, and contribution to the State interest. While these are appropriate considerations, AMEC believes that greater clarity would help ensure consistent application of the framework. Providing guidance on indicative thresholds, assessment factors, and decision-making processes would improve transparency and allow proponents to better align their projects with government priorities. This would also help manage expectations and ensure the SSP designation is applied in a predictable and equitable manner.

Approvals Framework Integrity

AMEC strongly supports the Bill's confirmation that core approvals, including environmental authorities, resource tenure, and Indigenous rights processes, remain mandatory and are not displaced by the new framework. This is a critical aspect of the reform, as it maintains the integrity of Queensland's regulatory system and ensures that projects remain subject to appropriate environmental, social, and legal safeguards.

Maintaining these foundational processes is essential for both industry and community confidence. For proponents, it ensures that approvals are granted within a stable and recognised legal framework. For stakeholders, it provides assurance that key protections are not being removed to expedite project delivery. AMEC considers that this balance is fundamental to achieving the Bill's objectives of both facilitating development and maintaining high standards of governance.

Conclusion

AMEC recognises the importance of the Bill in positioning Queensland as a leading jurisdiction for critical minerals and resource development. The reforms represent a significant opportunity to enhance the State's competitiveness, streamline approvals, and attract investment in emerging industries.

At the same time, the scale and nature of the proposed changes require careful implementation to ensure that the regulatory framework remains balanced, transparent, and accessible. Achieving the right balance between efficiency and certainty will be critical to the long-term success of the reforms.

AMEC supports the intent of the Bill and looks forward to continuing to work with the Queensland Government to ensure that the final framework delivers outcomes that benefit both industry and the broader community.

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