10 October 2026

Re: Mineral Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2026

To: Primary Industries and Resources Committee

Introduction

The Queensland Government introduced the *Mineral Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2026* (the Bill) in the Queensland Parliament on 15 September 2026. The stated key objective of the Bill is to deliver a more efficient framework for assessing mining lease applications and associated environmental authority applications while ensuring appropriate opportunities for community participation.

The Queensland Government has stated that the proposed reforms would:

- clarify who can make an objection to an application for a mining lease and its associated environmental authority;
- clarify the matters that can be raised in an objection;
- change how objections are considered and how matters may be referred to the Land Court;
- reduce duplication between mining lease and environmental authority assessment processes;
- remove public notification, submission and objection processes for low-risk applications for environmental authorities; and
- improve coordination of public notification processes for mining lease and related environmental authority applications.

About AMEC

The Association of Mining and Exploration Companies (AMEC) is a national industry association representing over 550 member companies across Australia. Our members are mineral explorers, emerging miners, producers, and a wide range of businesses working in and for the industry. Collectively, AMEC's member companies account for over $100 billion of the mineral exploration and mining sector's capital value.

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, and collectively paid over $59.4 billion in royalties and taxes.

AMEC represents more than 80 companies operating in Queensland, providing a united voice for junior and mid-tier explorers and miners who regularly apply for Mining Leases in Queensland.

General Comments

Overall, the proposed amended legislation is welcomed and supported by AMEC.

In particular, the AMEC is supportive of the limitation of mining lease objections to directly affected communities (125km eligibility zone), the removal of the *Mineral Resources Act 1989* environmental impacts assessment (removal of duplication, as also assessed under the *Environmental Protection Act 1994*) and the simplification of the public notice process.

Additionally, AMEC and industry support the amendments to the Land Court processes. The amendment to decision makers deciding whether to refer objections, as opposed to all objections being automatically referred to the Land Court.

AMEC believes the proposed Bill will improve the efficiency and coordination of mining approvals and will also give Queensland a competitive advantage in ensuring its resource potential is fulfilled.

Mining Lease Objections

Under the current framework, any person may object to a mining lease application or an associated environmental authority application. In practice, objections can delay mining projects for extended periods and are increasingly being used as a quasi-regulatory mechanism rather than as a means for genuinely affected parties to raise legitimate concerns. This has prompted legislative reform aimed at reducing the misuse of the objection process.

The Bill amends section 260 of the *Mineral Resources Act 1989* (MR Act) requiring that only 'eligible entities' may lodge objections to a mining lease application. An eligible entity is defined as either an "affected person" or an owner of land within the proposed 125km eligibility zone.

This amendment is intended to ensure that objections are limited to those with a direct and demonstrable interest in, or connection to, the proposed mining operation. By restricting standing to affected parties and landholders within the defined eligibility zone, the Bill seeks to prevent objections from entities with no direct connection to Queensland or to the mining lease itself, thereby reducing unnecessary delays and inefficiencies in the approvals process. Establishing a clearly defined 125km zone also provides greater transparency and certainty about who is eligible to participate in the objection process. To enable this transparency, Government tools such as GeoResGlobe should include a layer with the 125km extent around only Mining Lease Applications impacted by the new 125km eligibility zone. There should also be an option for people to search Public searches for resource authorities site to see if a property is in the 125km zone.

In addition, the Bill proposed narrowing the grounds on which an objection may be made. Currently, objections may be lodged for any reason, including matters unrelated to the statutory decision-making criteria. This creates additional delays, inefficiencies and uncertainty for both proponents and decision-makers. The proposed amendments would require objections to be relevant to the applicable decision-making criteria, ensuring that only matters directly related to the application assessment are considered.

Collectively, these reforms are expected to contribute to a more efficient and timely mining lease approvals process, reducing regulatory uncertainty and improving investment confidence. The amendments may also reduce legal and consultancy costs incurred by proponents in responding to objections that are not directly relevant to the assessment process.

However, representatives of the agricultural sector and rural communities have raised concerns about the proposed limitation of objection rights to directly affected parties. Concerns have also been raised regarding the compatibility of the amendments with the *Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld)* and broader principles of procedural fairness and natural justice.

AMEC recommends that the Government continue engaging with, and seek the support of, the agricultural sector to address these concerns before implementation. Failure to do so may increase the likelihood of future legislative amendments, potentially undermining the policy certainty sought through these reforms.

AMEC further recommends that the legislative process comprehensively address any legal issues relating to human rights considerations and natural justice. Once enacted, industry requires confidence that the framework is legally sound and unlikely to be subject to legal challenges or significant political pressure for amendment. Regulatory certainty is critical to supporting investment decisions and maintaining Queensland's attractiveness as a destination for mineral development.

Referrals to Land Court

The Bill proposed significant changes to the process for referring mining lease objections to the Land Court. Under the current framework, a properly made objection automatically proceeds to a Land Court hearing. The Bill removes this requirement and instead gives the relevant decision-maker discretion to refer a matter to the Land Court where independent consideration is necessary.

To achieve this, sections 265, 267A – 269 and associated provisions of the MR Act are repealed and replaced with a new referral framework. Under the proposed model, the Chief Executive can only refer a mining lease application to the Land Court where a properly made objection exists and a referral is considered warranted.

AMEC supports this amendment, as it is expected to reduce pressure on the Land Court (Court) and ensure that only matters requiring independent adjudication are referred for hearing. Court proceedings can be resource-intensive for all parties and may result in duplication of assessment processes, particularly where environmental impacts have already been examined through related mining lease and environmental authority applications.

Reserving Land Court hearings for complex, contentious or significant matters represents a more efficient use of both regulatory and judicial resources. The proposed amendment should enable the Court to focus on issues that materially assist decision-making, while reducing unnecessary delays and costs for industry. Greater efficiency in the approvals process is also expected to improve regulatory certainty and strengthen investor confidence.

This proposed Bill also requires that, where a matter is referred to the Land Court, the Court's consideration be confined to specified matters and the grounds raised in properly made objections. This is consistent with the broader objective of ensuring that the objection and referral processes remain focused on relevant consideration.

However, AMEC notes that the introduction of a discretionary referral process may create a new area of legal uncertainty. There is potential for increased litigation over whether a decision to refer, or not to refer, a matter to the Court was made in accordance with the law. This may give rise to judicial review.

The Government should clearly define and publish the circumstances in which a referral should occur and provide transparent decision-making criteria.

Removal of Duplication between Mining Lease and Environmental Authority Assessment processes

Under the current legislative framework, the Minister administering the MR Act is required to consider the environmental impacts of a proposed mining operation when determining a mining lease application. This assessment occurs in addition to the environmental assessment process under the Environmental Protection Act 1994 (EP Act), creating duplication across the approvals process.

The Bill addresses this duplication by removing the requirement for the Minister administering the MR Act to separately consider environmental impacts already assessed through the environmental authority process under the EP Act. Environmental assessment and oversight will continue under the EP Act, where environmental matters are more appropriately and comprehensively regulated.

AMEC supports the continued requirement for robust environmental assessment. AMEC also supports removing regulatory duplication, as proponents should not be required to repeatedly establish the same environmental case under separate statutory frameworks. Streamlining these assessment processes will allow environmental considerations to be addressed through the most appropriate legislative mechanism while avoiding unnecessary repetition.

The proposed amendment represents a positive step towards reducing regulatory burden and improving the efficiency of the approval framework. By removing overlapping assessment requirements, the Bill has the potential to reduce costs for industry, improve approval timeframes, and make more effective use of government resources.

Importantly, the amendment does not remove environmental assessment obligations. Rather, it clarifies responsibility for environmental assessment within the existing EP Act framework and avoids duplication of effort across multiple decision-making processes. This should result in a more streamlined and predictable approvals pathway while maintaining appropriate environmental safeguards.

Public Notification

The Bill proposes removing public notification, submission, and objection processes for lower-risk environmental authority applications. Presently, all environmental authority applications are subject to a public submissions process, regardless of the level of environmental risk involved. This can contribute to delays and administrative inefficiencies in the approvals process.

The proposed amendments would exempt lower-risk projects from public notification, submission or objection requirements. These projects are intended to include standard and variation environmental authority applications, which are generally considered to present lower environmental risks. Higher risk projects would continue to be subject to public participation processes, including combined submission and objection arrangements where applicable. Importantly, major projects undergoing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process would continue to provide opportunities for public input.

AMEC supports the intent of this amendment, as it promotes a risk-based and proportionate regulatory framework. Directing regulatory and community engagement resources to higher-risk and more complex projects will enable government agencies and stakeholders to focus where it is most needed, while reducing unnecessary administrative requirements for lower-risk activities.

The proposed changes are expected to improve the efficiency and timeliness of environmental approvals by reducing regulatory burden for lower-risk projects and allowing resources to be allocated more effectively across the approvals system. This, in turn, should contribute to greater certainty for proponents and more efficient use of government resources.

Transitional Provisions

The Bill contains extensive transition machinery. This is necessary as there may be applications:

- lodged but not yet decided;
- referred to the Land Court;
- already before the Land Court;
- with hearings already commenced;
- with Land Court recommendations already issued.

It is understood that for some existing applications, the current laws will apply, and for others the proposed framework and processes will apply. This creates a transition period where an old law and its provisions, and a new law and transitional provisions, will all need to be understood simultaneously. This creates a complex operating environment for industry (albeit a temporary one) with significant administrative and possibly legal risk.

AMEC recommends that the Government publish worked examples of the transition process before the reforms commence. Detailed guidance for the transition period is desirable to ensure that business and commerce are not held up.

Other

The Bill makes numerous consequential reference changes and Regulation amendments, with numerous provisions requiring renumbering. The Government should publish a consequential amendment table for all regulations, forms and guidelines. This is important for industry because administrative practice can effectively add to regulatory burden even where the statute has removed it. It is also good practice to provide marked up draft Bills.

Recommendations

AMEC supports the Bill overall, it does make some minor recommendations. The Government should:

- ensure Government mapping tools include 125km buffer layer around new impacted Mining Leases;
- clearly define and publish the circumstances in which a referral to the Land Court should occur and provide transparent decision-making criteria;
- publish detailed worked examples for the transition process;
- publish a consequential amendment table for all regulations, forms and guidelines.

Final Comments

AMEC considers the Bill to be a broadly positive reform package that has the potential to deliver material improvements to Queensland's resources approvals framework. The proposed amendments are expected to reduce approval timeframes, improve regulatory certainty, lower transaction and compliance costs, and support more efficient decision-making across government.

A key strength of the Bill is its focus on reducing duplication. The proposed reforms to objection rights, Land Court referrals, environmental assessment processes and public notification requirements collectively seek to create a more proportionate and risk-based approvals framework.

Increased certainty around approvals timeframes and processes is likely to improve investment confidence and support the continued growth of Queensland's resources sector. Government agencies should also benefit from a more streamlined and efficient allocation of regulatory resources, particularly through the ability to focus public participation and Land Court processes on higher-risk, more complex and contentious matters.

AMEC therefore supports the intent and overall direction of the Bill. However, the long-term success of the reforms will depend on ensuring that the legislative framework is legally robust and supported by other key stakeholders. Addressing these matters prior to implementation will help maximise the benefits of the reforms, strengthen confidence in the approvals system, and provide the certainty required to support ongoing investment and development in Queensland's resources sector.

It is also critical that the transition period is supported through clear guidelines and worked examples. The transitional provisions risk being complex, creating delays for industry and reducing the investment benefits in the resource sector intended by the Bill.

AMEC appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the Bill, and if necessary, can be called upon to provide further information or clarification.

For further information contact:
Kate Dickson, Head of National Operations and Queensland Director – 0407 004 885 kate.dickson@amec.org.au
Tarnya Widdicombe, WA Policy Manager – 0402 294 557 tarnya.widdicombe@amec.org.au