State of the industry - Metal Ore Mining

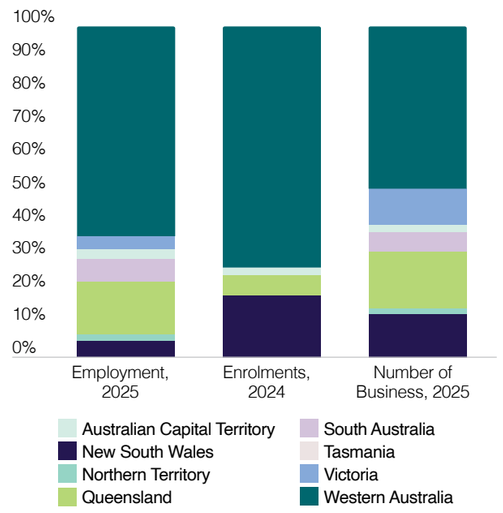
The Metal Ore Mining sector has experienced strong and sustained employment growth over the past decade, making it the largest employer among all mining subsectors.

Employment in the Metal Ore Mining sector has increased significantly over the last ten years (Figure M17). It accounts for the highest employment level across all mining subsectors. The most rapid growth occurred between 2015 and 2019, when employment almost doubled from approximately 63,000 to 120,000.

Employment and education in the industry is concentrated in Western Australia, while business establishments are more geographically dispersed, with a concentration in Western Australia (Figure M18).

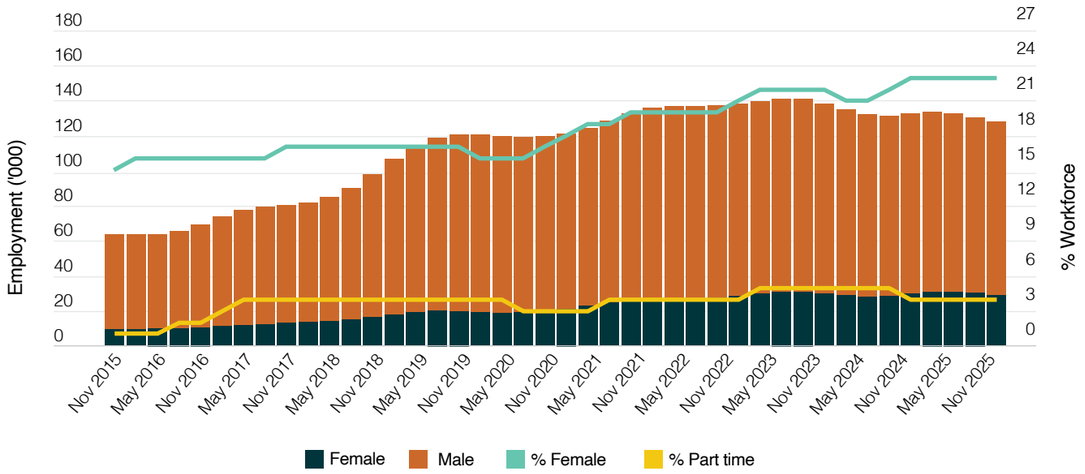
Although most of the employment is based in WA and QLD, businesses are distributed more broadly across Australia. There are also notable disparities between enrolment and employment locations. NSW accounts for 18.2% of the metal ore-related qualifications, while represents 4.5% of the total employment in the sector.

Figure M18: Employment size, number of enrolments and businesses by state and territory, 2024–2025



Source: ABS, Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, November 2025; Trended by AUSMASA; ABS, "Counts of Australian Businesses, including Entries and Exits, June 2021 to June 2025", December 2025; VOCSTATS, "Total VET students and courses 2015-2024", 2024.

Figure M17: Metal Ore Mining extraction employment, 2015–2025



Source: ABS, Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, November 2025; Trended by AUSMASA.

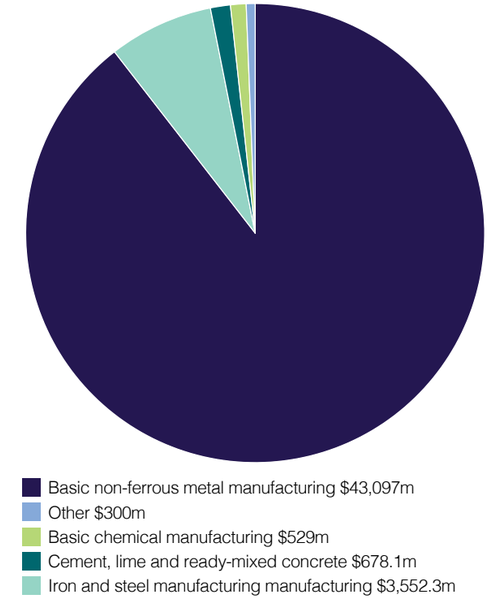
The sector is a key input into the Manufacturing industry

Most of the sector's domestic output directly supports Basic Non-ferrous Metal Manufacturing, highlighting a strong downstream linkage to this segment of the manufacturing industry. Specifically, around 89.5% of domestic output is supplied to Non-ferrous Metal Manufacturing, while 7.4% flows to Iron and Steel Manufacturing (Figure M19). This suggests that the Metal Ore Mining sector's domestic value chain is heavily concentrated in non-ferrous metal processing, unlike other subsectors, which are diversified across multiple industries.

8 out of 11 key occupations are experiencing shortages.

Key occupations in Metal Ore Mining closely mirror those of the broader Mining industry (Table M4). With Metal Ore Mining accounting for approximately 43.0% of total Mining employment in 2025, the sector plays a major role in defining the workforce composition and key occupational trends across the entire Mining industry. As the industry continues its journey towards electrification demand for diagnostic, digital, and electrical skills is rising.

Figure M19: What does the sector support in 2023?



Source: ABS, "Australian National Accounts: Input-Output Tables, 2022-23", March 2025.

Table M4: Key occupations, 2025

Occupations	Employed	10-Yr vacancies change	Included in CSOL?	Shortage
Drillers, Miners and Shot Firers	24,100	178%	No	RS
Metal Fitters and Machinists	14,400	148%	Yes	S
Other Building and Engineering Technicians	9,700	20%	Yes	NS
Electricians	6,600	140%	Yes	S
Truck Drivers	6,600	63%	No	S
Mining Engineers	4,500	185%	Yes	S
Production Managers	3,500	59%	Yes	NS
Geologists, Geophysicists and Hydrogeologists	2,900	247%	Yes	S
Other Construction and Mining Labourers	2,800	120%	No	NS
Structural Steel and Welding Trades Workers	2,600	72%	Yes	S
Diesel Motor Mechanic	92	No data	Yes	S

Source: ABS, Labour Force Estimate: Customised Report, 2026; JSA, "Occupation Shortage List", 2025; JSA, "Internet Vacancy Index (IVI)", February 2026; Department of Home Affairs, "The Core Skills Occupation List", 2024; Note: 1. RS: Regional Shortage; S: Shortage; NS: Not in Shortage 2. Employment is calculated as the four-quarter average for 2025 across occupation unit groups within each sub-industry, rounded to the nearest 100. For Diesel Motor Mechanics, the 2021 census employment figure is used instead.