State of the industry - Mining

The Mining industry's employment remains stable, but its transition toward critical minerals will require coordinated support to sustain workforce growth and manage structural shifts.

The Mining industry continues to experience stable employment, with a workforce of around 300,000. The female workforce comprises a stable 18.9% of the workforce, and a part-time workforce of 5.2% (Figure M8). As the industry shifts towards critical minerals, employment is expected to grow. However, that transition will require targeted support and coordination to ensure it is seamless, particularly if there are workers moving between commodities or types of activity.

Mining training is concentrated in Queensland, but employment and businesses are largely based in Western Australia due to structural and geographic factors.

A large majority of the Mining industry workforce receives education and training in Queensland (QLD) (54.6%); however, employment and employers are more concentrated in Western Australia (WA), creating a skills supply-demand friction (Figure M9). Multiple reasons account for this disparity – various Mining employers prefer in-house non-accredited training, and businesses are also skewed towards areas with higher incidence of natural resources, which WA and QLD tend to have more of, given the size of the states.

QLD also has a concentration of Coal Mining activity, which has led to the establishment of strong industry-RTO partnerships. Given that coal mining is more heavily regulated (particularly via state-specific regulations), employers are more likely to rely on accredited training pathways. This reliance allows RTOs to purchase equipment and roll out larger-scale delivery models, which benefit from economies of scale and are easier to adapt to other non-coal training and pathway services. This can explain why QLD tends to have a larger concentration of enrolments across the Mining industry.

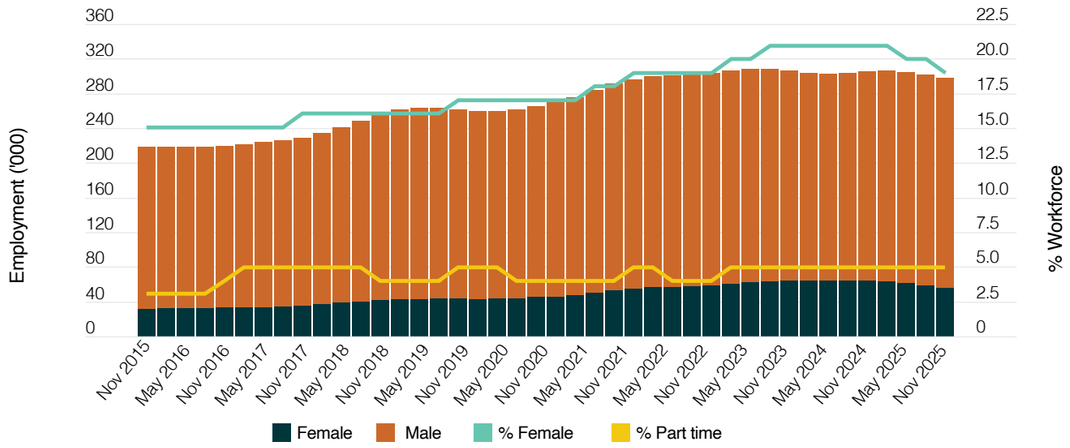
Over half of the Mining industry's domestic output directly supports the Manufacturing industry, with the remainder used to produce energy.

Approximately 58.1% of mining output is used to manufacture mining-related commodities, including basic non-ferrous metals, petroleum and coal products, iron, and other materials. Around 24.5% of the output is consumed within the Mining industry itself, while about 6.6% is allocated to electricity generation. (Figure M10).

9 out of 11 key occupations in the Mining industry are facing shortages

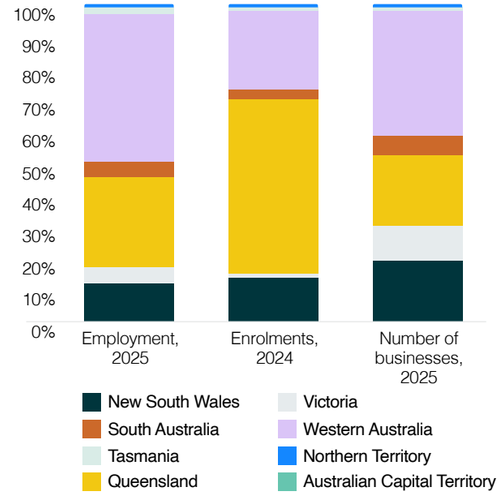
Key occupations in the Mining industry face shortages, as the industry competes with construction and transport (Table M1). These key occupations saw vacancy growth over the past decade. Although the industry has been an early adopter of electrified vehicles and solutions, it still has a considerable fleet of internal combustion engine vehicles. The maintenance and upkeep of this fleet requires a sizeable cohort of Diesel Motor Mechanics, but the skills pipeline has been constrained by industry-wide perceptions and recruitment challenges.

Figure M8: Mining employment, 2015–2025



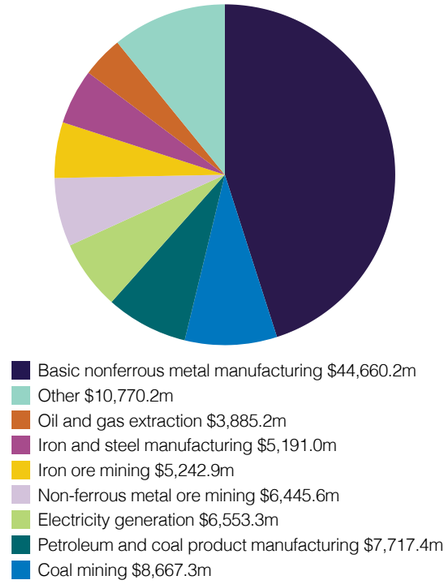
Source: ABS, Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, November 2025; Trended by AUSMASA.

Figure M9: Mining 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 M10: What does the mining sector support in 2023?



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

Table M1: Key occupations, 2025

Occupations	Employed	10-Yr vacancies change	Included in CSOL?	Shortage
Drillers, Miners and Shot Firers	54,100	178%	No	RS
Metal Fitters and Machinists	29,900	148%	Yes	S
Other Building and Engineering Technicians	20,100	20%	Yes	NS
Electricians	15,200	140%	Yes	S
Truck Drivers	14,500	63%	No	S
Mining Engineers	10,700	185%	Yes	S
Production Managers	8,100	59%	Yes	NS
Geologists, Geophysicists and Hydrogeologists	7,900	247%	Yes	S
Earthmoving Plant Operators	6,300	67%	No	S
Structural Steel and Welding Trades Workers	5,600	72%	Yes	S
Diesel Motor Mechanic	341	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.

Key strategic challenges in the industry

System pressures

The Mining industry is undergoing structural transformation while facing persistent and record-level **skills shortages** across engineering, technical and regional roles. Demand is rising for **higher-education-aligned occupations** as the sector shifts toward **critical minerals**, **automation**, **electrification**, and **low-emissions** operations.

Workforce pressures

Declining university enrolments, migration constraints, and misalignment between training systems and industry needs are **restricting supply**. **Regional** workforce pressures, infrastructure and **housing shortages** further limit attraction and **retention**. Community perceptions, **mental health** concerns linked to FIFO work, and **succession planning** across the **mine life cycle** add complexity, placing workforce capability at the centre of productivity, resilience and the energy transition.