

Foreword

This study offers guidance on how the region of the Pilbara, Western Australia, can shape a more inclusive and sustainable development model that supports economic diversification and prioritises improving the living conditions of its communities, particularly of First Nations peoples.

The demand for metals and minerals is rapidly evolving due to the profound digital and environmental transformations of our economies and societies. Amidst the escalating demand for minerals, governments, investors and society have increased their focus on ensuring a reliable supply of minerals while improving the environmental and social effects of mineral production. For example, most OECD countries have set national strategies to ensure a reliable and environmentally sustainable minerals supply.

The green and digital transitions in mining will bring opportunities and challenges for regional and local development. Greater use of renewable energy to power mining operations or circular economy practices in mining can open new business opportunities in local economies and reduce environmental impacts. However, without the right policy framework, local communities and businesses might miss out on the benefits of these developments and, instead, be left with their adverse effects.

Against this backdrop, this study highlights that the Pilbara, a top global supplier of iron ore, can leverage the green transition to diversify its economy and improve the well-being conditions of its communities, particularly for First Nations peoples and thus lead in the shift towards more sustainable mining.

To this end, the Pilbara must address important challenges impacting quality of life and stifle growth potential and responsible mining investment in the region. These include addressing low economic diversification, high socio-economic disparities between First Nations and non-First Nations populations, shortage of affordable housing and difficulties in recruiting labour to deliver essential services.

This study identifies 16 recommendations across 4 thematic pillars to help the Pilbara adopt a new development model with a long-term vision that ensures greater participation of First Nations in the region's development and more effective co-ordination among state and federal ministries and private companies to address the main priorities of its communities.

This is the 4th study of the OECD Mining Regions and Cities Initiative, which supports countries and regions in implementing better regional development policies in a mining and extractive context. Previous studies in this series include Outokumpu and North Karelia (Finland), Norrbotten and Västerbotten (Sweden) and Andalusia (Spain). This report benefitted from input from many stakeholders in the Pilbara during the 4th OECD Mining Regions and Cities Conference in Karratha, Australia, in June 2023. It was approved by the OECD Working Party on Rural Policy (WPRUR) [CFE/RDPC(2023)13] via written procedure in August 2023.

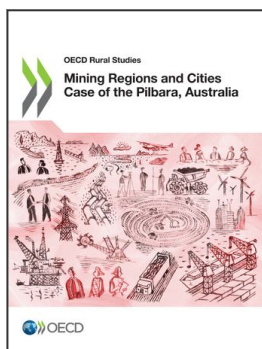
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