

MANAGING MINING COMMUNITIES AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: A CENTRAL QUEENSLAND CASE STUDY

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Abstract

The mining sector is a major contributor to both Queensland and Australia's economy, and exerts significant social impacts on those communities that host extractive activity. Both these facts have now been accepted by mining companies, communities, and government. However, mining activity has a limited life and this has led to wide acknowledgement of the need to manage mining, and mining communities, in a truly sustainable way. This paper focuses on issues of sustainability in the Bowen Basin region of central Queensland. It identifies the key strategic issues facing the ongoing development and sustainability of the region during "boom and bust" cycles. Key topics include a socio-economic characterisation and mining sector overview, together with the attendant implications for provision of hard and soft infrastructure and recommendations for the management of community wellbeing alongside regional growth. The work highlighted two difficulties when working with sustainable development data in the region: one problem is the rapidly changing nature typical of the mining sector, where dramatic 'booms' can be closely followed by sharp downturns. This leads to rapid fluctuations in regional statistics, making it very difficult to obtain, collate and report these accurately before the status quo has changed. Secondly, there are gross inconsistencies between the approach, coverage and style of figures used by different reporting bodies, making comparative studies difficult. This work was conducted in the closing stages of 2008 – the juncture at which a relatively long-lived mining 'boom' began to face a substantial decline in the global economy. Nevertheless, the data and information in this paper is critical to regional development and community wellbeing in regions hosting mining, regardless of the current 'boom' or 'bust' cycle being experienced.

Biography

Bob is currently the Managing Director of Miles Consulting Services specialising in regional economic development and natural resource management. Bob has more than 25 years experience in research related to the sustainable regional economic development and the use and management of Australia's Natural Resources, including building community engagement and governance. Bob was awarded my PhD in 1993 and has held a range of senior management positions within Queensland Government including the General Manager of the Office of Rural Communities (a whole of Government portfolio) and Regional Director for DPI and most recently the Executive Director of the Institute for Sustainable Regional Development (ISRD) at Central Queensland University. Bob was the past Chairman of CQ a New Millennium, the regional growth management framework for Central Queensland and facilitated the establishment of the Queensland Centre for Climate Applications. Bob is an appointed Fellow of Australian Institute Management.

Over the past three years Bob has been the Principle Consultant to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs on Engaged Government, the Poverty-Environmental nexus Central and Southern Asia and now Climate Change Impacts in the Asia Pacific and International Consultant to the Central Government of the Peoples Republic of China and the Asia Development Bank on the economic development of the Gansu Province.