



# AUSTRALIAN MINERALS INDUSTRY

## *CODE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT*

(January 2000)

### **Introduction**

The Code for Environmental Management was launched in December 1996 as an initiative of the Minerals Council of Australia on behalf of the Australian minerals industry. It was a significant step by the industry to address its environmental performance and public accountability. At that time, the industry made a commitment to review the Code in three years. This revised Code is the result of the review undertaken in 1999.

### *Summary of Code Obligations*

Commitment to the Code brings a number of obligations. In summary, these are:

- Progressive implementation of the Code.
- Production of an annual public environment report within two years of registration.
- Completion of an annual code implementation survey to assess progress against implementation of Code principles.
- Verification of the survey results, by an accredited auditor, at least once every three years.

The Code secretariat may, on occasion, ask signatories to reaffirm their commitment to the principles of the Code. In keeping with the voluntary nature of the Code, a signatory may withdraw its commitment to the Code at any stage.

**AUSTRALIAN MINERALS INDUSTRY**  
**CODE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT**  
**(2000)**

**INDUSTRY VISION**

*A valued Australian minerals industry  
achieving outstanding environmental,  
social and economic performance.*

**CODE MISSION**

*To achieve continual improvement in the  
environmental performance and  
accountability of the Australian minerals  
industry through implementation of the  
Code.*

**SIGNATORY VALUES**

**Signatories to the Code commit to:**

- Integration of environmental, social and economic considerations into decision-making and management, consistent with the objectives of sustainable development\*.
- Openness, transparency and improved accountability through public environmental reporting and engagement with the community.
- Compliance with all statutory requirements, as a minimum.
- A continually-improving standard of environmental performance and, through leadership, the pursuit of environmental excellence throughout the Australian minerals industry.

\* Sustainable development: *"development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."* Our Common Future, Brundtland 1987

## THE PRINCIPLES: ELEMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

*We, the signatories to the Australian Minerals Industry Code for Environmental Management, commit to progressively implementing the Code by:*

<b>1</b>	<b>ACCEPTING ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL OUR ACTIONS</b> <b>Driving environmentally responsible behaviour throughout the organisation by:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demonstrating management commitment.</li><li>• Allocating clear roles, responsibilities, accountabilities and resources.</li><li>• Providing necessary information, performance targets, training, resources and management support.</li></ul>
<b>2</b>	<b>STRENGTHENING OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE COMMUNITY</b> <b>Engaging the community about the environmental performance of our operations by:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fostering openness and dialogue with employees and the community.</li><li>• Respecting cultural and heritage values and facilitating cross-cultural awareness and understanding.</li><li>• Consulting with the community on the environmental consequences of our activities.</li><li>• Anticipating and responding to community concerns, aspirations and values regarding our activities.</li></ul>
<b>3</b>	<b>INTEGRATING ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT INTO THE WAY WE WORK</b> <b>Ensuring environmental management and related social issues are high priorities by:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establishing environmental management systems consistent with current standards.</li><li>• Incorporating environmental and related social considerations into the business planning process along with conventional economic factors.</li><li>• Applying risk management techniques on a site-specific basis to achieve sound environmental outcomes over the life of the project.</li><li>• Developing contingency plans to address any residual risk.</li><li>• Ensuring resources are adequate to implement the environmental plans during operations and closure.</li></ul>
<b>4</b>	<b>MINIMISING THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF OUR ACTIVITIES</b> <b>Responsibly managing immediate and longer-term impacts by:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assessing environmental and related community effects before and during exploration and project development.</li><li>• Evaluating risks and alternative exploration and mining project concepts, taking into account community views and subsequent land use options.</li><li>• Adopting a proactive and cautious approach to environmental risks throughout the life of each operation.</li><li>• Applying ecological principles that recognise the importance of biodiversity conservation.</li><li>• Planning for closure in the feasibility and design phases of a project and regularly reviewing plans to consider changes in site conditions, technology and community expectations.</li></ul>

<b>5</b>	<b>ENCOURAGING RESPONSIBLE PRODUCTION AND USE OF OUR PRODUCTS</b> <b>Pursuing cost-effective cleaner production and product stewardship by:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Employing production processes that are efficient in their consumption of energy, materials and natural resources.</li><li>• Minimising wastes through recycling, and by reusing process residues.</li><li>• Safely disposing of any residual wastes and process residues.</li><li>• Promoting the safe use, handling, recycling and disposal of our products through an understanding of their life cycle.</li></ul>
<b>6</b>	<b>CONTINUALLY IMPROVING OUR ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE</b> <b>Continually seeking ways to improve our environmental performance by:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Setting and regularly reviewing environmental performance objectives and targets that build upon regulatory requirements and reinforce policy commitments.</li><li>• Monitoring and verifying environmental performance against established criteria so that progress can be measured.</li><li>• Benchmarking against industry performance and addressing changing external expectations.</li><li>• Researching the environmental aspects of our processes and products and developing better practices and innovative technologies.</li></ul>
<b>7</b>	<b>COMMUNICATING OUR ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE</b> <b>Being open and transparent in the effective disclosure of our environmental performance by:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identifying interested parties and their information needs.</li><li>• Providing timely and relevant information including publication of annual public environment reports on our activities and environmental performance.</li><li>• Encouraging external involvement in monitoring, reviewing and verifying our environmental performance.</li><li>• Continually reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of our communications.</li></ul>

# CODE IMPLEMENTATION

## ELIGIBILITY AND REGISTRATION

All exploration, mining and minerals processing companies and contractors are eligible to become signatories to the Code, (provided they commit to its implementation). Membership of an industry association is not a prerequisite to becoming a signatory. Similarly, being a signatory is not a prerequisite for association membership.

Companies committing to the Code will be recorded on a register maintained by the Code secretariat. The Minerals Council of Australia currently provides the secretariat. State and territory minerals councils, chambers of mines and other minerals industry associations are encouraged to endorse and promote the Code.

Companies wishing to commit to the Code need to advise the Code secretariat by letter, and will be asked to sign a code certificate pledging commitment to the Code principles and obligations. Signatories will be added to the register, which is available for public inspection. Individual companies may choose to publicise their registration.

## COVERAGE

The Code will apply to all signatories' activities wherever they operate. It will also apply to the relevant activities of contractors engaged by the signatories.

Signatory companies will strongly encourage application of the Code principles to operations in which they hold a non-controlling interest.

## PERFORMANCE REVIEW AND REPORTING

Signatories to the Code are committed to reviewing and reporting their environmental performance, consistent with the Code's signatory values.

The reporting requirements are outlined below. They refer to the involvement of an External Environmental Advisory Group. Further information on this group is in the Guidance Note *Australian Minerals Industry External Environmental Advisory Group – Terms of Reference, and Roles and Responsibilities*.

### 1. *Commitment to Continual Improvement*

Rather than setting entry standards, the Code requires signatories to commit to continual improvement by progressively implementing the Code's principles.

### 2. *Annual Public Environment Reports*

Signatories to the Code will produce annual public environment reports (PERs) within two years of the initial registration, and then annually.

The reports will demonstrate the company's commitment to and implementation of the Code, and describe its performance against the Code principles. Reports should also describe verification initiatives.

Companies will make their annual environmental reports easily accessible to the public, in hard copy or electronic form. Copies of the report will also be lodged with the Code secretariat.

### 3. *Self-Assessment of Performance against Code Principles*

Each year, Code signatories will assess their progress against the Code principles, using the Code Implementation Survey.

Signatories will submit a single Implementation Survey return each year.

The implementation survey is not intended to replicate or be a substitute for a signatory's own assessment or review processes. Indeed, surveys may be completed at the corporate level where systems can support such an approach.

The completed code implementation survey return will be submitted by the signatory's chief executive officer to the secretariat by the end of December each year.

The Survey must assess annual performance. Companies may choose to link their Implementation Survey to the reporting timeframe used for their public environment report or other corporate reporting requirements.

Signatories will verify their Code Implementation Survey return at least every three years using an accredited internal or external auditor, and provide a verification statement, outlining details of assessment methodology, to the secretariat. It is expected that this triennial verification process will be incorporated into signatories' existing audit programs.

#### **4. Industry-wide Analysis of Performance against Code Principles**

Each year, in consultation with the External Environmental Advisory Group, the Code secretariat will make an industry-wide analysis of performance against Code principles drawing on the implementation survey returns.

In undertaking the analysis, the secretariat will use the results of the implementation surveys to identify performance trends against Code principles over time, and analyse factors affecting performance against the Code

The analysis and the results will be provided to the Environment Committee of the Minerals Council of Australia, and the aggregated results will be made available to the public.

#### **5. Revising the Guidance Note for Auditing Code Implementation**

The Environment Committee, in consultation with the External Environmental Advisory Group, will revise the guidance note for auditing code implementation (verification).

#### **CODE IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE**

The Code is a principles-based document, designed as a framework to assist in improving environmental performance.

For guidance with implementing the Code, refer to:

- Code Guidance Notes (eg environmental reporting, auditing the EMS, auditing implementation of the Code, auditor accreditation, contractors) found on the Code website: [www.enviro-code.minerals.org.au](http://www.enviro-code.minerals.org.au)
- Minerals Council of Australia policy statements (eg mine closure, multiple land use). These can be found at the council's website: [www.minerals.org.au](http://www.minerals.org.au)
- Series of Best Practice Environmental Management in Mining modules, available from the Australian Minerals and Energy Environment Foundation (AMEEF). Contact AMEEF through their website: [www.ameef.com.au](http://www.ameef.com.au)
- AMEEF technical guidance, including the database on its website.
- Environmental management standards such as the ISO 14000 series. Refer to Standards Australia website: [www.standards.com.au](http://www.standards.com.au)
- Australian Centre for Mining Environmental Research (ACMER) technical guidance and information in the Centre's publications. Contact ACMER through its website: [www.acmer.com.au](http://www.acmer.com.au)

#### **CODE REVIEW**

The Code will continue to be refined and developed in consultation with stakeholders. The Code will be formally reviewed no later than 2004, in consultation with the External Environmental Advisory Group, after which signatories will be invited to recommit to the Code.

A key element of the next review will be the development of a strengthened approach to Code verification.

***For a copy of the Code or further information, visit the Code website:***

**[www.enviro-code.minerals.org.au](http://www.enviro-code.minerals.org.au)**

***or contact the secretariat:***

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