



# Bosses raring to go on US deal

**Tom Zaubmayr and Lanai Scarr**

Fast-tracking WA critical minerals development to boost sales to the US could turbocharge Goldfields job prospects in the emerging mining sector.

Australia's biggest resources chiefs have pressed the Federal Government to put some "meat on the bones" of a plan to boost Australian critical minerals sales to the US, saying it will create about 4000 jobs in the next five years in WA.

Australian Mines and Metals Association head of policy Tom Reid said 40 per cent of WA's new mining production jobs would come from new critical minerals

projects. "Developing the critical minerals sector is vital to creating jobs and economic growth in Western Australia, in particular the resource-rich Kalgoorlie region," he said. "The Kalgoorlie lithium hydroxide plant 2022 is one project in the Kalgoorlie region captured in our forecast.

"Whilst the forecast only counts projects either 'committed' or 'publicly announced', it's important to keep in mind another five projects are under serious consideration in the region."

Mr Reid said those projects included nickel, cobalt and triuranium octoxide developments, which could generate hundreds of jobs in the region. Rare

earths and critical minerals are used in everything from mobile phones and computers to wind turbines and defence industry tech-

nology.

The vibrating motor in a mobile phone is made with rare earths, as is the lithium-ion battery. China supplies most of the world's critical minerals and rare earth elements, but the US would like to buy more from Australia — one of its closest security allies.

Australia is ranked second in the world for rare earth elements and second for production, yet many of these resources remain untapped.

Minerals Council of Australia chief executive Tania Constable said next week's visit from US Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross, pictured, was a positive step forward but more detail was needed rather than just talk.

"There is huge potential for Australia, in particular Western Australia, so we welcome the continued dialogue and look forward to seeing some meat on the bones," she said.

"The US-Australia Critical Minerals Action Plan has the potential to create new jobs across the country, especially in Western Australia, which has rich deposits of rare earths and critical minerals."

The Critical Minerals Supply Chain in the US report released on Monday by Austrade found the "critical minerals and rare earths sub-sector would benefit from closer engagement with US end-users".

Trade Minister Simon Birmingham said Australia could fill big gaps in the supply chain.



Picture: McClatchy Tribune