



Iron ore mining on a massive scale at Mount Tom Price in the Hamersley Range (W.A.). This mine alone extends for nearly 8 kilometres and produces over 20 million tonnes of ore a year.

Minerals

The story of Australia's minerals is one of risk, hardship and achievement.

In a harsh unyielding land that continues to defy settlement, enterprising prospectors, geologists and exploration survey teams alike have faced the rugged outback conditions in their painstaking task of unlocking the secrets of the earth beneath them. Their difficulties have been compounded by the fact that much of the mineral wealth lies concealed beneath a thick cover of altered rock, sand and soil—the product of eons of weathering. Although many deposits were discovered by the early prospectors further riches have been revealed only relatively recently by the application of geoscientific principles and sophisticated exploration tools capable of penetrating the thick overburden.

Once discovered, the development of an isolated deposit usually involves the installation of all necessary infrastructure. Not only must mine and processing plant be constructed but transport facilities, power and water supplies, and township and community facilities must also be supplied. One benefit of mining often overlooked is that the establishment of mining communities in remote regions, for example Kalgoorlie, Broken Hill and Mount Isa or more recent townships such as Newman, Weipa and Moranbah, has helped to break down the isolation of the vast Australian interior.