

Rio Tinto Secures \$2Billion Subsidy to Transition Boyne Smelter to Green Energy

Mining giant Rio Tinto has received a \$2 billion taxpayer-funded subsidy to support the transition of its Boyne aluminium smelter in North Queensland to renewable energy. This landmark deal, described by Industry Minister Tim Ayres as one of the most significant decarbonisation and industrial investment commitments in Australian history, aims to ensure the smelter's operation beyond its current power contract, which ends in 2029.

The Boyne smelter, employing approximately 1,000 people in Gladstone and Weipa, is one of several metals processing facilities in Australia facing financial challenges due to rising energy costs. The federal and state governments have previously provided financial support to other facilities, including the Whyalla steelworks in South Australia, Glencore's Mount Isa copper smelter, and Nyrstar Australia's smelters in Hobart and Port Pirie. Negotiations are also underway for a subsidy package for the Tomago Aluminium smelter in New South Wales.

The funding for the Boyne smelter comes from the \$2 billion production tax credits scheme announced in January 2025, designed to help transition Australia's aluminium smelters to renewable power. Rio Tinto will receive production-linked credits for every tonne of aluminium produced using green energy, with payments tied to evidence of clean power usage.

Rio Tinto plans to invest in power purchasing agreements supported by a mix of hydro, gas, battery storage, solar, and wind energy. This initiative is expected to catalyse a fivefold private investment, expand the renewable energy grid, and secure thousands of regional jobs in Central Queensland.

The deal underscores the government's commitment to economic resilience, productivity, and sustainable energy solutions, ensuring Australia's industrial sector remains competitive in a rapidly changing global market.

Source: AFR – Ryan Cropp – Energy climate Reporter 25/3/2026

Environmental Impacts of the War in Iran

How the Conflict Is Reshaping Regional Ecosystems, Public Health, and the Global Climate

The ongoing conflict in Iran has rapidly escalated into one of the most environmentally destructive wars in recent history. Beyond the geopolitical and humanitarian crises, the environmental toll is profound—affecting air quality, water systems, ecosystems, and global emissions in ways that will reverberate for decades.

Toxic Air Pollution and “Black Rain”

Strikes on oil depots, refineries, and industrial sites have produced massive plumes of toxic smoke over Tehran and surrounding regions. Residents have reported black, oily rain—a dangerous mix of hydrocarbons, ultrafine particles (PM_{2.5}), heavy metals, and carcinogenic PAHs. Experts warn this contamination poses severe risks to respiratory health, agriculture, and water systems.

The World Health Organization has flagged the resulting “acidic rain” as a direct threat to vulnerable populations, including children, the elderly, and those with asthma.

Fires, Explosions, and Long-Term Contamination

More than 300 verified environmental incidents—from burning oil facilities to damaged missile bases—have been documented, though analysts believe the true number is far higher. These events release hazardous pollutants that can persist in soil and groundwater for years, creating a toxic legacy that will outlast the conflict itself.

The United Nations has warned that these attacks risk “serious environmental consequences” across the region, threatening safe water, breathable air, and food security.

Regional and Global Climate Impacts

In just the first two weeks of fighting, the war generated over 5 million metric tons of CO₂ emissions—more than the annual emissions of 84 countries combined. Much of this came from the destruction of buildings and infrastructure, which releases embedded carbon at massive scale.

While the immediate concern is public health, scientists note that soot and micro-particulates can travel hundreds of miles, affecting air quality far beyond Iran's borders.

Marine and Ecosystem Damage

Attacks on oil tankers and coastal facilities have raised alarms about marine pollution in the Persian Gulf, a region already under ecological stress. Remote sensing specialists have identified hundreds of high-visibility environmental impacts, including oil slicks and contamination of sensitive coastal ecosystems.

Threats to Water and Food Security

Pollutants from burning infrastructure and damaged industrial sites are seeping into waterways, threatening drinking water, irrigation systems, and agricultural land. Experts warn that contamination of rivers and reservoirs could have cascading effects on food production and public health.

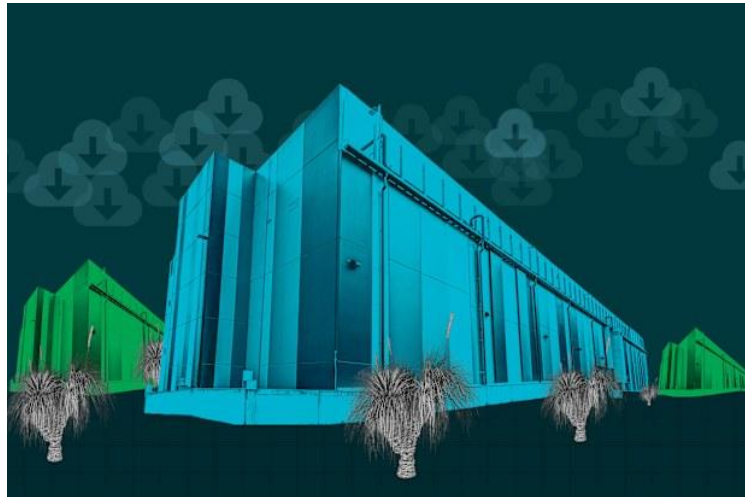
What This Means for the Future

Environmental damage from conflict is often overlooked in the immediate fog of war, yet its consequences are long-lasting and deeply destabilizing. The war in Iran is a stark reminder that environmental security is inseparable from human security—and that the climate costs of conflict extend far beyond carbon emissions.

As the situation evolves, environmental monitors continue to struggle to keep pace with the scale of destruction. But one thing is clear: the ecological fallout will shape the region's recovery, resilience, and health for generations.

AI synopsis of the impact of the War in Iran.

Australia Sets New Ground Rules for Data Centre and AI Expansion



The Albanese government has released a national interest framework designed to ensure the rapid growth of data centres and AI infrastructure doesn't undermine Australia's energy transition or water security. The policy outlines five expectations for new large-scale compute projects, centred on national security, resilience and social licence.

Energy: "Support the transition, don't strain it"

With data centres now consuming about 2% of Australia's grid electricity, the government will *expect* (but not mandate) new projects to add renewable generation to cover some or all of their usage. Developers will also be expected to pay their full share of network connection costs and support grid flexibility. Projects that fail to align with these expectations will not be prioritised for federal regulatory assessments.

Water: Protecting drinking supplies

The framework calls for efficient water use and a shift toward recycled or non-potable water sources. Although data centres currently account for less than 0.05% of industrial water consumption, the government is moving early to avoid the backlash seen overseas.

Fast-tracked approvals for aligned projects

Canberra will work with states to introduce a two-track approvals pathway, accelerating projects that meet the national interest criteria. The move follows global pressure on AI companies to fund their own power generation, with some US

operators even reviving nuclear plants. Anthropic has already signalled it will pay for new generation and grid upgrades if it builds in Australia.

National security, innovation and jobs

Large-scale compute providers will be expected to:

- Prioritise Australian national security requirements
- Provide privileged access to local start-ups
- Build domestic technical capability through apprenticeships and training partnerships
- Create well-paid jobs and contribute to a sustainable innovation ecosystem

Social licence front and centre

Unions and digital policy leaders welcomed the framework, emphasising the need for rapid implementation. The government argues that securing AI infrastructure onshore strengthens national security, supports local research and ensures Australian data benefits Australians.