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# A new dawn: Japan and Australia make it officially critical

Mining | 4 hours ago | Special Report



Japan is securing Australia's raw materials for advanced manufacturers and US trade. Pic: Getty Images

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- **Heightened pursuit of critical minerals among friends for economic and national security**
- **Projects aplenty from coast to coast as Australian state and federal governments weigh in**
- **Six Australian projects earmarked as strategically important in landmark agreement**

***Special Report:* A host of advanced critical minerals projects are poised to serve the interests of Australia and Japan, breaking China's chokehold and plugging supply chain vulnerabilities in mining, refining and advanced manufacturing.**

Iron ore from BHP's Mount Whaleback mine and coal from the east coast forged the steel that rebuilt the cities of Japan after WWII.

Now, in another century, Japan is rocking up to Australia and looking to the nation's critical minerals and rare earths for economic and national security.

"The world faces intensifying geopolitical competition and a shaking of the international order," Japan's Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi said during a state visit.

"Both our nations face the challenge of promoting our freedom to decide for ourselves and strengthening resilience ... it is imperative that we further deepen our co-operation on economic security, including the strengthening of supply chain resilience.

"I look forward to forging an even deeper bond with Prime Minister Albanese who, like me, has a real passion for rock music."

## **Rock-solid supplies**

Addressing the most urgent supply chain vulnerabilities in mining, refining and advanced manufacturing, **six projects were highlighted in a deal** signed by the

musical PMs in Canberra on May 4 that recognised they were ahead of the curve but needed to do much more.

These included the pioneering **Lynas Rare Earths (ASX:LYC)** project, a flagship initiative that dates back to 2011.

The joint venture between Sojitz Corporation and JOGMEC, which is the Japanese agency responsible for securing their supply of resources, provided equity and loan financing for light rare earth production.

The project reached a further milestone in 2025 with the start of heavy rare earth production.

**Ardea Resources (ASX:ARL)** Kalgoorlie Nickel Project Goongarrie Hub, a joint venture with Sumitomo Metal Mining, and Mitsubishi Corporation, has funding support from Japan and up to \$1 billion in financing pledged by the US and Australia.

It hosts the largest nickel-cobalt resource in Australia, with future production aligned with expected market deficits.

Alumina giant **Alcoa Corporation's (ASX:AAI)** gallium recovery project in Western Australia, supported by equity investments from the governments of Australia, Japan and the US, is testing methods to extract the key input for semiconductors and defence from bauxite residue.

Aiming to produce 100 tonnes annually – about 10% of global supply – the project should break utter dependence on Chinese supply.

Currently re-arming Japan and standing up to China, Takaichi has taken a strong stance on Taiwan, declaring that a Chinese naval blockade or attack on Taiwan could constitute a “survival-threatening situation” for Japan.

“Ensuring a stable supply of critical minerals is a strategic priority for both our countries,” she said, citing rare earths from Lynas and the gallium project in particular.

Metals processing pioneer Magnium Australia is on the list for its high-purity magnesium project at a plant in Collie, WA.

Japanese trading company Hanwa and the Government of Japan have both expressed an interest in the private company, which is developing the production of low-emission, high-purity magnesium suitable for defence, aerospace, electronics and green energy applications.

The Speewah fluorite project, a joint venture between Sumitomo Corporation and JOGMEC, in collaboration with Darwin's **Tivan (ASX:TVN)**, aims to produce acid-grade fluorite, a key raw material for hydrofluoric acid used in semiconductors, EVs, and other advanced technologies.

Fluorite, also known as fluorspar and dubbed the lithium killer, was added to Australia's critical minerals list in 2023 as a key component in next-gen EV batteries.

RZ Resources' (ASX:RRZ) Copi mineral sands project in New South Wales, with support from JX Metals Corporation and Marubeni Corporation, has pledged support from Export Finance Australia and the US Export Import Bank.

The mine and associated infrastructure, currently under state government assessment, includes extraction and processing of up to 45Mtpa of ore via dredge mining over 20 years.