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Opinion Piece

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Our pathway to a cleaner future relies upon mining

We all want our children to live in a cleaner world. We also want them to live in an Australia that's successful, independent and safe. To do this, our pathway to decarbonise the Australian economy must be ambitious, optimistic and aspirational, but also practical and achievable.

Last year the Albanese government took charge of our renewable energy transition and enshrined into law the emissions reduction target of 43% from 2005 levels by 2030. A key assumption to achieve this target is that Australia will generate 82% of our electricity from renewable sources.

Tasmania is a world-leader in renewable energy generation, and we've been 100% self-sufficient since 2020. But the rest of Australia has a lot of work to do. To be successful, the speed and scale of the transition will need to be unprecedented. It's been estimated that to meet Labor's 2030 target, over the next seven years we will need to install 22,000 solar panels every single day and build 40 wind turbines every single month, as well as lay more than 28,000 kilometres of transmission lines.

These estimates assume that there will be no increase in the demand for energy, which seems unlikely. But you also need to factor in Labor's election promise to put 3.8 million new electric vehicles on the road by 2030 - all of which will need to be recharged on renewable energy.

Where will the components come from that drive our successful transition? It may seem counter-intuitive, but the answer is, from our world-leading mining industry.

Lithium, nickel, cobalt, manganese and graphite are crucial to battery performance. Rare earth elements are vital for wind turbines and EVs. Electricity networks need copper and aluminium, with copper being a cornerstone for all electricity-related technologies.

Our successful transition will require a change of mind-set for many, and the Albanese government is key to doing that. Instead of demonising mining as a force working against our renewable energy future, we must celebrate mining as the key to its success and the West Coast of Tasmania is already playing a crucial role.

Currently sitting on Federal Environment Minister Plibersek's desk is an application for MMG to proceed with works that are crucial to the mines ongoing viability. Approving that application will demonstrate that this government truly understands the practical actions required to achieve our renewable energy transition.