Quirky fact:
Did you know Queensland leads the world in the production of metallic minerals such as copper, lead and zinc?

Background Information
Queensland is rich in mineral and energy resources such as coal, gold, lead, copper, zinc, silver, nickel, tin, bauxite, uranium, industrial minerals, oil and gas. The Outback region contains some of the world’s richest copper, lead, and zinc deposits and is home to one of the largest mineral producers, Xstrata, Mount Isa Mines.

Queensland Copper Mines
Great Australia Mine – Cloncurry Copper
Ernest Henry discovered copper in 1867 while outcropping near Cloncurry. Full of optimism, he named his discovery ‘Great Australia’. From 1906, copper prices boomed and Cloncurry flourished. The railway extended to the town to meet demand but in 1920 prices crashed and ‘Great Australia’ ceased operations. Ernest Henry is still considered the ‘father’ of Cloncurry and the old mine boasts remnants of its heyday including Queensland’s oldest water-jacket smelter casing and Cornish boilers.

Ernest Henry Mine – Cloncurry Copper, Gold
The Ernest Henry copper-gold mine began commercial production in 1998. The plant provides for up to 10 million tonnes of ore to be extracted annually, to produce 100,000 tonnes of copper and 125,000 ounces of gold. Almost 3,500 people were involved in building the mine at a cost of $310 million and ensuing regional development has included a water pipeline, electricity transmission lines, conversion of Mica Creek Power Station to gas generation, a new airport terminal and improved air services.

Mount Isa Mine – Copper Lead Zinc Silver
Mount Isa Mines (MIM) began with the discovery of lead-zinc outcrops by John Campbell Miles in 1923. By 1941, large reserves of copper were found at Black Star mine and copper was smelted from 1943. Within two decades, new copper smelters saw the annual copper yield of Black Rock grow to twice the combined production of all other Australian mines. MIM developed the ‘Isasmelt’ process in the 1980s, increasing the annual lead output by over 200,000 tonnes. MIM is Australia’s largest underground mine and one of the world’s largest mining operations. It ranks in the top three producers of lead, top five producers of silver, 10th largest source of zinc and 19th largest producer of copper. MIM includes Enterprise Mine, Australia’s most recent and deepest underground copper mine and George Fisher Mine, one of the largest undeveloped lead-zinc deposits in the world.

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**Inquiry Questions**

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<td>How has the environment and migrants’ cultural backgrounds influenced Outback communities?</td>
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<td>What geomorphic process caused minerals to be part of this landscape?</td>
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<td>Investigate the challenges for mining in this area (e.g. sourcing workers).</td>
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<td>History</td>
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<td>What were the impacts of mineral discoveries in the Outback, especially migration?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>7/8</td>
<td>What geomorphic process caused minerals to be part of this landscape?</td>
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<tr>
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<td>How does scientific understanding help people to manage the region’s environment and resources?</td>
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**Points of Interest**

- **Outback at Isa**
  - The **Hard Times Mine Tour** provides a unique first hand experience into the daily life and workings of an underground mine.
    - 19 Marian Street, Mount Isa QLD 4825
    - **Cost:** Entry fee applies
    - **Contact:** 1300 659 660 or (07) 4749 1555
    - **Email:** info@outbackatisa.com.au
    - **Website:** www.outbackatisa.com.au
  - *check on the day for wheelchair access to mine. 4WD occasionally available.

- **The Ernest Henry Mine Pit Tour,** Cloncurry
- **Underground Hospital Museum,** Mount Isa
- **Royal Flying Doctor Service Visitor Centre,** Mount Isa

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

- **Language and Power in Nineteenth Century Mining: A View from North Queensland**
  - Source: Journal article by Jan Wegner; Journal of Australian Studies, 1999
- **Australian Mining History 1848 to 1999**
- **Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Mines**

**REFERENCES**

- **Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Mines Factsheets**
- **Republic of Mining**
  - www.republicofmining.com
- **Ernest Henry Mining**
  - www.ernesthenrymining.com.au
- **Mount Isa City Council**
  - Phone: (07) 4747 3200
  - Email: city@mountisa.qld.gov.au
  - www.mountisa.qld.gov.au
- **Queensland Resources Council**
  - www.qrc.org.au/

**FURTHER INFORMATION**

- **Outback at Isa Riversleigh Fossils Interpretive Centre and Mount Isa Tourist Information Centre**
  - 19 Marian Street, Mount Isa QLD 4825
  - Phone: (07) 4749 1555 or 1300 659 660
  - Email: info@outbackatisa.com.au
- **Mount Isa Mines**
  - Private Mail Bag 6, Mount Isa QLD 4825
  - Phone: (07) 4744 2011
  - www.mountisamines.com.au

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**Map:**

- Outback Queensland Education Handbook | Australian Curriculum Factsheets