Building knowledge and sharing experience from a practice perspective.

Social and economic inequality now sit at the forefront of debate about mining and development. A range of complex global issues — from rapid population growth and resource scarcity, to resource nationalism and political volatility — set the broader context for mining and development. At the local level, competition for control over land, water and mineral resources can exacerbate conflict and impede positive social development outcomes.

Within this context, community relations and development have emerged as important functions in the global mining sector. Despite advances in mining industry policy, achieving ‘good relations’ and ‘equitable development’ remain significant practice challenges on the ground.

ComRel focuses on understanding practice to build industry knowledge and capability in social performance.

The social aspects of mining are more critical than ever before. ComRel provides a strong foundation for practice-based research and learning to address these challenges. This builds on CSRM’s experience engaging with the social issues of mining since its inception in 2001.
OUR AIM

ComRel supports CSRM’s aim to work towards improving social performance in the resources sector

We have three core research objectives that support our aim

01
INTEGRATE SOCIAL KNOWLEDGE INTO DECISION-MAKING ABOUT MINING AND DEVELOPMENT
By ensuring that social science knowledge is utilised throughout the mine life cycle in addition to integrating community or local knowledge in decision making.

02
INCREASE THE INFLUENCE OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONERS
By understanding how their work can influence corporate and institutional structures, systems and strategies.

03
BRIDGE PROFESSIONAL AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCE
By enhancing the dynamics between foreign and host cultures, indigenous cultures, organisational and professional cultures.
STRENGTHENING THE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

*ComRel* supports the growth and development of the emerging profession of Community Relations by:

- profiling insights from practical experience that contribute to global debates about mining and development
- providing appropriate training, education and professional development for community relations and development practitioners
- providing opportunities for practitioners to network and connect to others in their field

**POST-GRADUATE EDUCATION**

Formal education and professional development are integral parts of any community of practice. CSRM offers qualifications at a Masters, Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate level in Community Relations (Resources Sector).

**FLAGSHIP WORKSHOPS AND TRAINING**

- Extractives Sector: Effective Social Performance (in collaboration with the Cambridge Program for Sustainability Leadership)  
  www.cpsl.cam.ac.uk/extractives
- Community Relations Practitioners: Foundation Training for Site Teams (delivered on site or in regional localities)
- Bespoke training and workshops on specific issues (e.g. grievance mechanisms, engagement planning, resettlement, community development, conflict resolution)

To find out more visit [www.csrm.uq.edu.au/education](http://www.csrm.uq.edu.au/education)
OUR APPROACH TO ENGAGING INDUSTRY

We deliberately engage with industry to understand decisions and actions from an industry perspective and to influence, shape and propose better practices.

The external context in which companies operate has an influence on their social performance. The way a company is 'set up' also determines how they perform. Access to internal processes is critical if CSRM is to achieve its overall aim of improving social performance in the resources sector.

Our work with industry is constructive. Our approach is to engage in a long-term dialogue to challenge and 'disrupt' conventional industry thinking and encourage alternative perspectives on social performance. We avoid taking assignments that require us to uncritically 'showcase' industry practice. We also avoid academic critique that simply points to the moral failure of companies to uphold responsibilities, without offering pathways forward. We seek to understand the barriers as well as the enabling factors that influence practice.

LONG-TERM LINKAGES

Our preference is to establish long-term linkages to operations and communities. This enables our researchers and collaborators to build familiarity with context and people, which in turn enhances our ability to contribute constructively. Reciprocal relationships built on dialogue and respect are just as important in the internal domain as they are in the community domain. Our approach distinguishes us from scholars who engage only as 'outside experts'.

Our objective is to engage in a long-term dialogue to challenge and ‘disrupt’ conventional industry thinking and encourage alternative ways of approaching social performance.
OUR WORK

We help companies navigate the social performance challenges through:

- applied research projects
- research consultancies
- program development
- development of practice guidelines and standards
- organisational diagnosis and review
- tailored training and workshops
- speaking engagements
- mentoring and practitioner support

While ComRel’s work and research is practice-orientated, we also track and contribute to international debates related to CSRM’s other thematic focal points, including:

- public policy
- conflict management
- resource governance
- self-regulation
- human rights
- resettlement
- consent and agreement-making
- gender and development
- accountability and transparency
- local economic development

ENGAGING OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

We work with other stakeholders to understand mining and social performance from a range of standpoints. Local communities, NGOs, civil society, regulators and other agencies have important insights into how community relations and industry-supported development work is perceived, resisted and experienced at the local level.
Companies must incorporate a disciplined social and development agenda into their business model if sustainable development is to have a genuine future within the industry.

STRENGTH IN OUR NETWORK

ComRel is led by Dr Deanna Kemp, Deputy Director of CSRM. For more than fifteen years, she has engaged with corporate leadership, managers and community relations and development practitioners at mines and corporate offices around the world, including in the Asia Pacific, Africa, Australia and the Americas.

A Technical Committee has been established to assist in leading and facilitating ComRel’s activities. Members are from The University of Queensland, consulting and mining sectors and have specialist experience in mining and community relations. Each has contributed to building the body of knowledge and/or capacity in mining and community relations. All are participating on a voluntary basis.

INDUSTRY AND HONORARY FELLOWS

CSRM’s Industry and Honorary Fellows are a core part of ComRel’s network. We connect through joint consultancies, writing projects, seminars, workshops, grant applications and other assignments.

IN-COUNTRY SPECIALISTS

Wherever possible, we collaborate with in-country specialists, researchers and topic experts to ensure that our work accounts for local context and culture as much as it does international norms and standards. Several of our trusted international collaborators are part of our network.

CSRM STAFF AND STUDENTS

Senior CSRM staff associated with ComRel supervise a small group of PhD and Masters students engaged in work and research that is embedded in organisational realities and/or crosses internal, external and other cultural boundaries.

CSRM staff engage with ComRel on specific projects and initiatives.
BUILDING AND SHARING KNOWLEDGE

ComRel maintains a commitment to sharing knowledge. This helps to build the capacity of industry personnel and others concerned with improving social performance. We achieve this through writing, education, training and the professional development of community relations practitioners.

In particular, ComRel is critically engaged with maintaining research integrity in applied, industry-orientated research. Part of maintaining our integrity is the ability to publish independently in peer-reviewed journals and public access outlets to ensure key issues remain at the forefront of public debate.

We publish in full disclosure form wherever possible and de-identified form if necessary.

RESEARCH INTERESTS

ComRel focuses on industry responses to the social performance challenges of mining and development. We are interested in a broad range of topics:

• characterisation of community relations and development practice in mining, particularly at the operational level
• challenges associated with transforming organisations and institutions to support community relations and development
• relationships between corporate cultures and structures, and their interaction with host communities
• power imbalances — including gender, class, age and ethnicity — and their relationship to social performance
• community engagement with the shifting dynamics of industry practice
• nature of ‘social’ and ‘community’ knowledge and integration into core business
• experience of local employees and others who work at the ‘front line’ of company-community interface
• the challenge of leading without authority, and gaining influence in the internal organisational domain
• new practices for innovative community relations and development practice, including monitoring and evaluation
• influence of global policy debates and other drivers on the enactment of community relations and development practice on the ground.
OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE WITH COMREL

COLLABORATE ON LONG-TERM RESEARCH

Individual organisations or consortia of organisations with a common interest can commission research to improve or address their challenges in community relations and development practice.

COMMISSION A PROJECT

Companies often have specific social performance challenges or issues to address. ComRel regularly takes on one-off projects in our areas of expertise.

We have undertaken community perceptions studies, grievance mechanism reviews, social performance assessments, retrospective conflict analyses, evaluations of community relations systems, functional reviews of community relations department structures and strategies. We have worked throughout Australia, in Papua New Guinea, Ghana, Indonesia, Peru, Laos, Chile and Mongolia on these and similar assignments.

Exposure to specific contexts provides important insights in terms of our ability to advance community relations and development practice in mining.

HOST ON-SITE OR TAILORED TRAINING

Frontline community relations and development practitioners have few opportunities for professional development. There is a demand to up-skill, team build and carefully examine practice in the field. Companies must invest in the development of practitioners and leaders who work ‘at the coal face’.

PARTICIPATE IN A PRACTITIONER’S FORUM

ComRel will build a network of managers, practitioners, consultants, researchers and others working in the practice space. This network will provide an access point for sharing experiences, resources and research opportunities.

We will produce and circulate a series of discussion papers, which we will distribute online for comment and debate. We will also provide opportunity to continue this discussion face-to-face at regional forums.
PROFESSIONAL SABBATICALS

ComRel offers professional sabbaticals for community relations and development practitioners from around the world. Practitioners can arrange to work with CSRM for one to three months to contribute to the development of knowledge about this field of practice.

Visiting professionals have the opportunity to meet with Professors and other senior academics and staff from within the SMI, as well as scholars within The University of Queensland and elsewhere. Visiting professionals will be welcome to attend (or speak) at SMI’s regular seminar series and meet students working on a wide range of contemporary topics. As part of the program, a schedule of reading, writing, discussions and other professional development activities will be arranged.

Visiting professionals commit to producing at least one output that provides a contribution to knowledge (e.g. journal paper, book chapter, case study, lecture, or workshop).

Practitioners can arrange to work with CSRM to take ‘time out’ and contribute to the development of knowledge about this practice domain.
OUR WORKING MODEL

SINGLE COMPANY PROJECTS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Through ComRel, CSRM will continue to offer world-class research services in social performance and development. We have a multi-year research partnership with Rio Tinto, and long-standing research agreements with other organisations, including Newmont Mining and Newcrest’s Lihir operation. Corporate partnerships, one-off projects and tailored trainings for individual companies form an important part of ComRel’s working model.

MULTI-PARTY COLLABORATIONS

Companies can commission pre-competitive research where they have common issues to address. The industry has a strong track record of collaborating on industry-level social performance standards and normative guidance. We are encouraging companies to pool funds in order to address common challenges in community relations and development. These collaborations offer important economies of scale.

INDUSTRY-WIDE INITIATIVES

We require linkage funds to extend our reach »
INDUSTRY-WIDE INITIATIVES

‘Linkage funds’ can support an industry-wide program of research and training to improve social performance practice.

LINKAGE FUNDING

For the past decade, CSRM has worked closely with the mining industry to address a range of complex social performance challenges. In our experience, the greatest potential benefit to the industry and individual companies — and for improved practice and social performance — comes through industry-wide initiatives. To make this transition, we are seeking linkage funds to support industry-wide initiatives that support the development of a common body of knowledge about community relations and development practice in mining.

These funds can be used to leverage various internal and external sources of funding and build collaborative industry-wide networks.

Linkage funds will initially be sought to:

• host a series of regional ‘practitioner roundtables’ in collaboration with our network
• build a global network of practitioners, managers, researchers, educators, trainers and advisers
• ensure that practitioner perspectives inform global debates about mining and development
• define applied research projects that will build the body of knowledge in this area of practice

We will provide an annual report of linkage fund expenditure.

Social professionals are integral to the future of mining. Linkage funds will help support industry-wide research and learning.

For inquiries about contributing linkage funds, please contact Deanna Kemp: d.kemp@smi.uq.edu.au.

All contributions of untied funding will be recognised on our website and during events and other forums.