

# Aligning critical ambitions

Could a strategic alliance formed among major airlines almost three decades ago serve as the perfect model for players in the critical minerals value chain to join forces and collectively find, develop and operate the mines needed to support global efforts to achieve net zero by 2050?

ERM global director critical minerals Toby Whincup certainly thinks so.

During a thought-provoking presentation at Paydirt's Battery Minerals Conference, Whincup drew comparisons between the formation of Star Alliance in 1997 and the potential benefits of a similar union among stakeholders across the entire critical minerals value chain.

"Star Alliance created a new milestone for the airline industry as the first global airline alliance linking five major airlines into a single network," he explained. "It offered a completely new type of service to the international traveller with the Alliance allowing airlines to work together to share everything from flight routes to airport lounges, ground crews and ticketing systems.

"This created operational and cost ef-

iciency and, most importantly, competitive advantage in the market. It transformed the industry, creating an industry based on end-to-end strategy and competition, capturing volume and delivering superior yields for Alliance members, whether they are upstream or downstream in the value chain.

"My question to this group; how could alliances be formed across the critical minerals value chain to transform how we get the required minerals to market in the timeframes required, while also enabling capital to flow to the clean or low-carbon mineral mines, in preference to more traditional approaches to the industry?"

Whincup also noted that while a number of "meaningful" JVs had already been established – more often than not to guarantee supply to OEMs – they were typically "transactional relationships" with the customer usually retaining the all-important purchasing power.

Although he proposes a seismic change to current thinking is needed to give the world the best chance of finding the required metals for net zero status by 2050, Whincup



Toby Whincup

insists it should not be to the detriment of the sustainable practices established across the mining sector which have successfully evolved over the last decade.

"Regulatory frameworks and industry standards, although necessary, are putting significant constraints on the sector's performance because of how they're being interpreted and used by others across that critical minerals value chain," Whincup said.

"We need to rethink our approach to that value chain in order to have a chance of getting the minerals to market at the pace and scale required to achieve net zero by 2050. The sector needs to regain that narrative from those up the value chain on what sustainable mining is. The mine we all want to see provides a clear framework for doing that."

– Michael Washbourne

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**GOLD AND CRITICAL MINERALS**

Map locations: Tambourah (Au/LS), Marble Bar, Mulligwo (Au/LS), Choola (Au), Tom Price, Paraburdoo, Russian Jack (Li/TA), Newman, Carnarvon, Meekatharra, Willuna, Achilles (Ni/PGF/Au/REE), Adam Range (REE), Laverton, Jallimar North (Ni/PGF/Au), Leonora, Kalbarrie, Southport, Derby.

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