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## Mount Isa Copper Mine Shuts Down After 70 Years

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The underground copper mine in Mount Isa, Queensland, ceased operations on July 31, 2025, ending a 70-year legacy and impacting nearly 500 jobs.

Mount Isa, Queensland, a city built on mining, fell silent on July 31, 2025, as Glencore's Mount Isa Mines (MIM) closed its underground copper operations after seven decades. The closure, announced in October 2023, marks the end of an era for one of the world's richest mineral deposits, costing close to 500 direct jobs and raising concerns about the region's economic future.

The mine, Australia's deepest at 1.9 kilometers, was a cornerstone of Mount Isa's identity, with daily blasts shaking the ground for 70 years. Glencore cited low ore grades, challenging geological conditions, and aging infrastructure as reasons for the closure, stating that the remaining resources were no longer economically viable. "The reality of mining is that mines have a finite life," said Sam Strohmayr, Glencore's Chief Operating Officer for Australian Zinc and Copper Assets. He noted that 170 workers were redeployed, with only five redundancies issued so far.

Local leaders expressed dismay. Mount Isa Mayor Peta McCrae said the impact would take months to fully sink in, with residents already leaving the city of 19,000. "It's heartbreaking to see people move away when there's still so much potential here," she told ABC News. The closure threatens the copper smelter, one of only two in Australia, which relies on the mine for 40% of its supply. Without government support, Glencore warned the smelter and Townsville refinery could also shut, further crippling the region.

Critics, including Katter Australia Party Member for Traeger Robbie Katter, argued Glencore should be held accountable, suggesting the mining lease be tendered to others. "Glencore's been good to Mount Isa, but now Mount Isa needs Glencore to step up," Katter said. Meanwhile, the Queensland government has offered limited aid, including \$20.7 million for Harmony Gold's Eva Copper Project, which could create 400 jobs.

The closure underscores broader challenges for Australia's mining sector, where finite resources and global market pressures threaten regional economies. Mount Isa's future hinges on new projects and government intervention to sustain its smelter and refinery, vital for Queensland's critical minerals industry.