

Fact Sheet

FINAL VOIDS

What is a mining void?

A mine void is the area of excavation that remains after mining is complete if the excavation is not backfilled. Depending on the mining method used, rehabilitation happens progressively during mining, so that mined areas are backfilled, shaped and revegetated.

In the case of open pit or bench-mining, backfilling of the pit can be severely restricted due to size and nature of the deposit, and the space required for mining equipment during operations.

Voids are created after mining because the rock and soil that is removed to reach the coal is used as part of this progressive rehabilitation process. This leaves some land, usually the mine's final active mine pit, unable to be completely filled when mining ends.



Why are mining voids allowed?

Final land use and final voids are determined at the planning approval stage.

While the detail on final land use and landform varies from mine to mine, these aspects are considered when a company first agrees to invest in a project.

Life of mine planning also reflects this, including key decisions on the location of a final void, the slope of walls (batter) in the final strip of mining and the level of in-pit dumping during mining.

In many cases, removing or backfilling voids is not practical and presents significant economic implications.

Glencore Coal's position on final voids

Our coal business aims to minimise residual mine voids where practical and economical, and to leave all voids in a condition that is safe, stable, non-polluting and sustainable.

Glencore plays an active role through the Australian Coal Industry's research program (ACARP) and industry associations to improve understanding and guidance on final voids and post-mining land use.



What can be done to minimise final void size and impact?

A detailed life-of-mine material balance is important in designing a final void. The volume and size of final voids is planned for early in a mine's life.

The size and number of final voids may be reduced by making best possible use of mine "overburden" to backfill pits.

A decision on the location of final voids also considers a number of factors, including:

- Potential pollution impacts on aquifers, creeks or other areas
- Geotechnical risks potentially caused by locating voids adjacent to built or natural features
- Land ownership or mining tenure constraints

Are there any benefits from leaving a mine void?

Final voids may contribute to the long-term economic diversification of a region once mining has ceased. When carefully planned and managed, they can form part of a broader post-mining landscape that supports new opportunities, attracts investment and encourages different forms of land use over time.

This can be especially valuable for communities that are, or have historically been, heavily dependent on mining, as it helps ease the transition away from a single-industry economy and supports sustainable regional development.

Examples of potential uses can include:



Recreational lakes



Wildlife conservation areas



Irrigation



Aquaculture and Hydro-electric power generation



Water storage