

Proposed book

The story of the decline of the South African mining industry



Ian Robinson



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Two authors with extensive experience in the South African mining industry, Rob Croll and Ian Robinson, are embarking on writing a book describing the current situation in the South African mining industry and the story of the transformation of the industry from its status as a world mining superpower in 1980 to a shadow of its former self.

The book will tell the story of the evolution of the South African mining industry since 1980 and recount personal experiences and opinions of people who have played important roles in the industry.

The industry is in a state of anarchy. Former prosperous mining towns have become ghost towns; illegal miners scavenge abandoned mines; companies with political connections strip mining properties with impunity; labour disputes have degenerated into strife and violence; environmental degradation in the Mpumalanga coalfields and Witwatersrand Basin has polluted the soil and water and threatens the health of local communities.

The industry is also in a state of paralysis. Mining's contribution to national GDP fell to 6,6% in 2017 compared with 19,4% in 1980 and the number of employees on South African mines has nearly halved from a peak of 829 235 in 1986 to 455 109 in 2017. At a mining conference in Perth, Australia in October 2017 CEO of the Minerals Council (formerly Chamber of Mines), Roger Baxter said that mining companies in South Africa had essentially frozen all investments in the country because of policy and regulatory uncertainty. There has been no major mineral discovery in South Africa since the Venetia diamond deposits in the 1980s.

We invite suggestions and contributions from SAIMM members.

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