



Special Edition of the Southern African Rare Earths Conference 2024



Rare earths elements (REE), often dubbed the ‘vitamins driving the 21st century industrial epoch and clean energy transitions’, have been a subject of debate and are at the centre of the geopolitical and supply-side tensions between China and the West. With everyone scrambling for de-risk of their supply chains, the attention is now increasingly being focused on seeking alternative sources of these critical raw materials. This is where Southern Africa, as a geopolitically neutral region rich in these irreplaceable raw materials, comes in to ensure the sustainable supply of the critical raw materials needed to drive the clean energy transition.

Although the Institute is historically known for its acumen for organizing thought provoking and interesting conferences, nothing would have prepared any reader for the perfect timing to release the special October edition. The special edition of the *Journal* is unique in that it showcases the Institute’s contribution to the global conundrum on the debate about these critical and strategic raw materials. This special edition contains seven papers that were selected from the 2nd International Conference on Southern African Rare Earths 2024 held in Swakopmund, Namibia. With the theme ‘Global Impact and Sustainable Supply’, the conference focused on fostering dialogue, leveraging on global diversity and innovation in the rare earths sector. The selected papers enhance an understanding of the occurrence and extraction of these vital elements from both conventional, and non-conventional resources, ranging from exploration and geology, characterization and concentration, right up to leaching behaviour, extraction, and recovery from solutions. The diverse nature and scope of the topical issues discussed in the papers included in this special edition highlights both the challenges and opportunities in harnessing the feasibility and economies of scale associated with the recovery of REEs from such complex, and low-grade resources.

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