

# **ARENA INSIGHTS SPOTLIGHT: THE VALUE OF COLLABORATION**

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE  
PARTICIPANTS OF THE  
ALUMINA WORKING GROUP

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Australian Government  
Australian Renewable  
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This month ARENA convened the first session of the Alumina Working Group, which brought together representatives from Rio Tinto, Alcoa, and South32 to discuss progress and share lessons in their decarbonisation efforts.

Following the inaugural session, representatives briefly reflected on the value of collaboration initiatives in this Spotlight Interview. Their various responses have been collected and are presented together thematically, without attribution.

#### **1. WHAT IS THE VALUE OF COLLABORATION TO YOUR DECARBONISATION PLANS?**

Decarbonising the alumina refining industry was described as both a challenge and opportunity, with sustained partnership and cooperation required for success. In the words of one participant, “working together and listening to all stakeholders, including customers, host communities, peers, and others”. Additionally, it was noted that a successful transition involves “identifying potential synergies in industry trials and research” to optimise capital allocation. The value of diversity of thought when confronting challenges inherent to a ‘hard to abate’ sector was also noted.

#### **2. WHAT ARE THE KEY ENABLERS FOR COLLABORATION INITIATIVES TO BE A SUCCESS?**

It was agreed that collaboration initiatives require the right settings to be successful. The relationship between the participants must be conducive to collaboration, with the intention that participants would share ideas, collateral, and costs equitably. Organisational support also plays an important role, including a willingness to pursue ambitious joint ventures both in Australia and internationally.

#### **3. HOW CAN COLLABORATION INITIATIVES BE DESIGNED TO APPROPRIATELY CREATE TRUST AND OPENNESS BETWEEN PARTICIPANTS?**

The importance of mutual commitment to establishing trust and openness was highlighted. Specific design features that were valued by participants included clear guidelines on which topics are in and out of scope, and prior agreement on the appropriate level of detail expected. In its role as a facilitator, ARENA sought to include these elements in the Alumina Working Group.

#### **4. HOW SHOULD THE SUCCESS OF THESE INITIATIVES BE EVALUATED?**

Some participants noted the goal of collaboration initiatives must be interpreted with reference to the overarching goal of decarbonisation - and in their case, coverage of the decarbonisation roadmap created by the group. Other indicators of success included robust participation, ongoing willingness from all parties to share new insights, the presence of collaborative discussions beyond the scheduled meetings, and avoided duplication of effort.

#### **5. WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO OTHER SECTORS LOOKING TO LEARN FROM YOUR EXAMPLE?**

Participants emphasised that collaboration (within the boundaries of anti-competition law) is vital for industry success, and shared various examples of how they had received mutual benefit. The leading example was the value members of the Alumina Working Group had found in working together to collaboratively design a technology roadmap for their sector. Another suggestion was to incorporate easy rules of engagement; for example, in the words of one participant, “share ideas, not data”.

Further information is available at  
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