

# OZ challenge reaps rewards

CAMERON ENGLAND

**BUSINESS EDITOR**

OZ Minerals is in the final stages of choosing the exploration target selected through its \$1 million Explorer Challenge and says the crowdsourced exploration approach has reaped many insights for the company.

In a process never before used by a mining company, Adelaide-based OZ threw open its data set to all and sundry last year, and encouraged people to submit a case for where to site its next drilling program near the Prominent Hill mine, on its Mt Woods project area.

More than 1000 expressions of interest were received, and teams were asked to pitch their ideas via video and a digital model, as well as listing their top 10 exploration targets.

A number of prizes were awarded, including a \$500,000 purse for the first prize.

Winners included data scientists, machine learning experts and a chemical engineer.

OZ managing director Andrew Cole said the company had been working with a number of the groups who took part in the challenge since it closed mid-year.

"We've been working with a number of the groups that participated in that challenge and have had them help us work through the targeting process," he said.

"We're in that final stage now of selecting which targets we're going to drill-test this year.

"I expect in the next month or so we'll start drilling those projects around Prominent Hill. Then we'll take data from that back into the process, so it will be iterative."

Mr Cole said a broader benefit was the company was now taking lessons learned through the Explorer Challenge and applying them to other exploration projects.

"It's been a little bit overwhelming in fact, in terms of how many useful insights have come out of this," he said.

Mr Cole said OZ was determined to use innovative methods across the business, highlighted by the company's executives visiting Amazon in Seattle some years ago to see how that company did business.

With regard to the company's West Musgrave copper/ nickel project in Western Australia, it was also aiming to bring leading edge ideas to bear.

"Because we're using an Agile methodology with the project, and we're inviting people in to help us and challenge us from all over the place, within Australia and globally ... whenever we run one of these processes we come up with new ideas that could help improve the quality of the project," Mr Cole said.

"Some of the things we're looking at haven't been done in the hard rock mining sector before.

"They look really interesting – they save money, they save carbon emissions, they make it more environmentally friendly – but we just want to make sure that they work and they're suitable for this project before we bank on them."

The timeline for the prefeasibility study for that project has been extended by four months to accommodate these potential changes, and is now expected to be released early next year.

The PFS is targeting a project with a mine life of more than 15 years.

**CAMERON.ENGLAND@NEWS.COM.AU**