

Gold strike to last for years

CAMERON ENGLAND



OZ Minerals sets ambitious target

OZ Minerals only officially opened yesterday, but is already looking at how it can double output from its billion dollar Carrapateena mine in the state's Far North.

The Adelaide-based firm's managing director Andrew Cole said the long-term plan for the copper and gold mine, which currently has a mine life of 20 years, was for a mining "province" which would operate for 60-70 years.

"We're already thinking about the next step," Mr Cole said, at the opening ceremony of Carrapateena, located 160km north of Port Augusta.

"The next step for Carrapateena is an expansion. One of the things we're working on very hard is to get this place up to more than twice the capacity of what it currently is," he said.

"It's already a 20 year mine life, but this area has the potential to be a 60 year mine life operation, at more than twice the capacity.

"We're really excited about that future."

The envisaged mine at Carrapateena is 4.25 million tonnes of ore per year, which it is expected to hit by the end of this year. Mr Cole, pictured, said the firm also wanted to expand production at the Prominent Hill copper and gold mine, southeast of Coober Pedy.

“That's currently a four million tonne per year operation, we want to almost double that at Prominent Hill, and take it from a 10 year mining operation to a 20 or 30 year mining operation and we've got people working on that very expansion at the moment.”

Mr Cole said the company was also working on a project in Western Australia – the West Musgrave nickel project

– which would be developed as almost a “carbon free” mining operation through the use of renewable energy and batteries.

The Carrapateena deposit, which is about 500m underground, was discovered by Adelaide-based solo prospector Rudy Gomez in 2005.

Mr Gomez, now in his mid-80s, said it was great to see OZ Minerals bring the project into operation, creating wealth and employment for the state.

Premier Steven Marshall said it was an exciting day for the company, and for the state.

He also praised the company's commitment to indigenous employment and its role in helping create indigenous-owned companies to work with the project.

More than 1000 people were employed during the construction of the mine, with 800 permanent jobs.