



Kalgoorlie Miner

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Bald Hill starts lithium output

Lithium production has begun at Tawana Resources' joint-venture Bald Hill mine, near Kambalda, and is expected to ramp up to its maximum rate in the coming months. It is the first Australian mine to begin lithium production since 2016, with Tawana managing director Mark Calderwood intent on optimising lithium yields.

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Picture: Tawana Resources



Tawana seeks to lift output

Zach Relph

Tawana Resources boss Mark Calderwood says production at the Bald Hill lithium mine could be doubled by the middle of next year to cater for mounting demand for the sought-after commodity.

Yesterday, Tawana announced it had started producing lithium at Bald Hill, a joint venture with Singapore-listed Alliance and Mineral Assets Limited 50km south-east of Kambalda, through its newly constructed dense media separation circuit — the first Australian mine to start spodumene production since 2016.

The 1.2 million tonne circuit's full production — a rate of 150,000 tonnes of spodumene annually — is expected to be reached by July, with its output poised to rise to 220,000 tonnes after the construction of a fine circuit before the year's end.

Mr Calderwood heralded the plant's seven-month construction period and said a second DMS circuit was scheduled to be established at Bald Hill by June, 2019 to cover future demand.

"We're aiming to ramp the plant up to its full run rate, which will

take three or four months to do," he said.

"We are also looking at mirroring the circuit ... that's the way the demand is heading and I believe we will find and declare the reserves to cover that and justify it.

"Ideally, we'd like to have the second circuit by some time next year."

The constructed processing plant was commissioned on February 15, with 20,000 tonnes of crushed ore stockpiled at Bald Hill.

The maiden lithium concentrate



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product is poised to be delivered next month.

Mr Calderwood said Tawana would focus on exploration to bolster its lithium reserves as it also worked towards the re-commissioning of the mine's tantalum circuits.

"We will also jack up our exploration and start adding more tonnes — exploration has really taken the back seat for the last six months," he said. "We have found a number of lithium pegmatites through mapping and water bore drilling which are targets, all within a few kilometres of the mine."

The Tawana announcement came as Mines and Petroleum Minister Bill Johnston ruled out any

changes to the existing royalty regime applied to so-called battery minerals such as lithium, cobalt and nickel. Speaking on the sidelines of the Paydirt Battery Minerals conference in Perth yesterday, Mr Johnston said the royalty rate review — initiated by the previous government — determined the royalties on minerals other than gold were adequate so there was no reason to change them.

Tawana Resources rose 6.5¢, or 14.9 per cent, to 50¢ yesterday.



Tawana Resources' dense media separation circuit at Bald Hill, near Kambalda. Picture: Tawana Resources