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Lithium appetite propels Tawana

Zach Relph

Tawana Resources boss Mark Calderwood says production at the Bald Hill lithium mine could be doubled by the middle of next year with surging demand for the battery mineral.

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

The circuit's 1.2-million-tonnes-a-year capacity, representing a run-rate of 150,000 tonnes of spodumene annually, is expected to be reached by July, with the company about to ramp up output to 220,000 tonnes after a fine circuit is built before the end of the year.

Mr Calderwood said a second DMS circuit was scheduled to be established at Bald Hill

by June to cover 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 product is poised to be delivered next month.

Mr Calderwood said Tawana would focus on exploration to bolster its lithium reserves, as it also works 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.

Tawana Resources shares closed up 6.5¢, or 15 per cent, at 50¢ on a good day for lithium players, with Galaxy Resources adding 29¢ to \$3.49 and Kidman Resources gaining 18¢ to \$2.19.



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