

Rio Tinto, Hancock Prospecting launch fourth Hope Downs development

[October 5, 2018](#)

[News Vanessa Zhou](#)



Image: Hancock Prospecting

Joint venture partners Rio Tinto and Hancock Prospecting have opened the Baby Hope mine, a fourth Hope Downs operation that boasts the use of automation.

Hope Downs, in the Pilbara of Western Australia, is already comprised of three major open pit mines – Hope 1 North, Hope 1 South and Hope 4 – producing high-grade lump and fines products.

Baby Hope is around four kilometres south-west of the Hope Downs 1 South deposit, and immediately north of the Lang Hancock rail line.

The development of the Baby Hope deposit will sustain the existing capacity of and ongoing jobs at Hope Downs 1. All necessary government and environmental approvals for Baby Hope have been secured.

Hope Downs 1 and 4 produced 46.9 million tonnes (Mt) of iron ore last year, representing one of Australia's largest and most successful iron ore projects in the lower cost quartile.

A total of 28 existing haul trucks at the Hope Downs 1 mine will be retrofitted with autonomous haulage system (AHS) technology and three

production drills at the Hope Downs 4 mine with autonomous drilling system (ADS) technology by 2020.

The automation is expected to bring productivity and safety gains to the mine's existing fleet. The equal joint venture (JV) was created when Rio Tinto bought in to Hope Downs in 2005, after Hancock completed a bankable feasibility study (BFS) and exploration.

Rio Tinto Iron Ore chief executive Chris Salisbury said, "This investment will ensure sustainable production levels at the Hope Downs 1 operation."

Speaking at the mine opening, Hancock Prospecting executive chairman Gina Rinehart thanked Rio for its investment in Baby Hope and other Hope Downs mines.

"As Hancock and some at Rio know, I have been pushing to see the development of Baby Hope, and I am excited that now the Baby Hope mine will be a welcome contributor to the future success of Hope Downs," Rinehart said.

Tad Watroba, who has been involved in the Hope Downs project since 1991, said, "Gina Rinehart's drive, hard work, determination and vision over decades has been essential in developing Hope Downs.

"It was not an easy path for Hancock, a then small company, to complete years of hard work to progress these major mines which make a huge contribution to Australia."

Hope Downs was named after Rinehart's mother, Hope, and was developed by a series of significant discovery by Rinehart's father, Lang Hancock, who uncovered major iron ore deposits in the Pilbara.

"Indeed, about 10 of which now form major mines for Rio Tinto, plus Hope Downs," Rinehart said.

Hancock and Rio shared a long history that went back to the early 1960's.

Salisbury said, "Together, we have played an instrumental role in developing the Pilbara and remain committed to pioneering new ways to innovate and improve our business for the future."

Rio Tinto, Gina Rinehart open new Hope Downs mine

- Oct 5 2018 at 4:20 PM



Rio Tinto Iron Ore chief executive Chris Salisbury, Hancock Prospecting group executive chairman Gina Rinehart and Greater Hope Downs general manager Gaby Poirier. *Supplied*

The joint venture between [Rio Tinto](#) and Gina Rinehart's Hancock Prospecting is set for a major technology overhaul as the two iron ore miners unveiled a new mine at their Hope Downs operations.

Development of the new Baby Hope deposit will be accompanied by 28 haul trucks and three production drills being retrofitted with autonomous technology, allowing the miners to increase productivity across the broader Hope Downs operations.

Baby Hope is located about 4 kilometres south-west of the Hope Downs 1 South Deposit.

"This investment will ensure sustainable production levels at the Hope Downs 1 operation," says Rio Tinto iron ore chief executive Chris Salisbury.

The new mine comes as Mrs Rinehart moves to mop up the remainder of Atlas Iron, with Redstone - a subsidiary of Hancock - last month upping its offer for the junior iron ore miner to 4.6¢ a share.

"As Hancock and some at Rio know, I have been pushing to see the development of Baby Hope, and I am excited that now the Baby Hope mine will be a welcome contributor to the future success of Hope Downs," Mrs Rinehart says.

Hope Downs 1 and 4 produced 46.9 million tonnes of iron ore in 2017.