

Rio Tinto and Hancock Prospecting open new mine at Hope Downs

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Rio Tinto and Hancock Prospecting opened a new mine at Hope Downs in the Pilbara, Western Australia.



Image courtesy ©Hancock Prospecting

The joint venture partners also approved an investment in greater automation, driving productivity and improving safety.

Development of the Baby Hope deposit will help sustain existing capacity at the Hope Downs 1 operation, supporting ongoing jobs at Hope Downs.

By 2020, a total of 28 existing haul trucks at the Hope Downs 1 mine will be retrofitted with Autonomous Haulage System (AHS) technology. Three production drills at the Hope Downs 4 mine will also be retrofitted with Autonomous Drilling System (ADS) technology. This deployment will deliver safety benefits to both haulage and drilling operations as well as productivity gains to the business through a higher utilisation rate of the existing fleet.

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

"This is a clear demonstration of our continuing commitment to the people of Western Australia and the joint venture partnership" he 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.

"As we introduce autonomous technology across the business we continue to work closely with our employees to develop their career pathways. To date, we have successfully redeployed or upskilled employees impacted by automation and we would expect this trend to continue with the extension of this technology at Hope Downs."

Speaking to staff and all of those involved in the project at the mine opening, Hancock Prospecting Group Executive Chairman Gina Rinehart thanked Rio Tinto for investing in Baby Hope, and other Hope Downs mines too.

"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", said Ms Rinehart.

"Hope Downs is very special to Hancock. It was named after a very special and beautiful lady, my mother Hope, a truly wonderful West Australian. My father, Lang Hancock, whose flights of discovery entailed him risking his life many times, was responsible for finding a significant number of major iron ore deposits in the Pilbara, indeed about 10 of which now form major mines for Rio Tinto, plus Hope Downs."

Tad Watroba, who has been involved in the Hope Downs project since 1991, noted that "the opening of any new mine is always the result of a significant amount of effort and hard work from a team of people.