

Bass Metals - 19 April 2007

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► **Explorers head to the island state**
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Explorers head to the island state

By Terry Long, Chief Executive
Tasmanian Minerals Council

The sleepy seaside port of Strahan on Tasmania's west coast comes alive in late May as mineral explorers from across Australia gather to dissect current and planned exploration programs around the state.

The township has a long mineral history – it was the export port for copper concentrates from Mt Lyell in its heyday. Now, it is among Australia's premier tourist destinations.

However, mineral exploitation and tourism still coexist in the region.

Not far to the north-west, Allegiance Mining is developing a promising nickel sulphide project, which is slated to produce high-grade concentrates in the last quarter of this calendar year.

There are also producing mines nearby at Queenstown (Mt Lyell) Rosebery (Zinifex) and Henty (Barrick), with the mothballed Renison tin operation slated to come back into production as tin price soars.

The Exploration Group forum has been organised jointly by the Tasmanian Minerals Council and the Tasmanian Government.

Last year, it was held at the east coast resort town of St Helens and this year the decision was made to swing it to the mineral-rich west coast.

The forum will run from May 23-25.

Apart from the producing mines, there is a range of exploration projects in swing in Tasmania.

For example, Zinifex have committed to a \$20m project on and around the Rosebery mine site, looking for both extensions to the rich polymetallic ore body and new ore bodies. Zinifex is aiming to step out the mine life beyond 2020.

Allegiance Mining, at the same time as constructing a mine and mill at their Avebury site just outside the township of Zeehan, is vigorously pursuing an exploration program over its leases and have already intersected other nickel deposits.

It has based its bankable feasibility study and the initial mine project on the Avebury ore body, but has already found similar deposits.

Higher commodity prices have allowed emerging miner Bass Metals, in a joint venture with Mancala, to bring the Cue River base metals deposit back into production and it is also running an aggressive exploration program at their other leases.

In terms of the carrot for both current and future explorers, the Tasmanian Government is beefing up its cutting-edge three-dimensional data by acquiring new data, particularly over the state's north-east, which has been under-represented in the existing model.

The program will cost some \$4m and will ensure that the three-dimensional model of Tasmania's geology is state of the art.

Tasmania's exploration industry is at its most buoyant since the 1980s, sparked in equal part by higher prices for metals, the provision of the three-dimensional insight into the state's geology and the discovery of nickel on Tasmania's west coast.

Until the Allegiance strike, nickel was the only major mineral thought to be absent from Tasmania's rich mineral palette.

The Exploration Group forum will offer mineral explorers and others the opportunity to be abreast of the latest developments with the projects and hear diverse views on other matters related to the wider industry. ■



Avebury Mill facility foundation stone.