

# On safari in Tasmania

Emerging explorer Bass Metals is looking for big game in the state's northwest.

By Charlotte Dudley

## ELEPHANT COUNTRY

- Bass Metals has significant interests in northwest Tasmania, including the Que River and Hellyer projects.
- Reviving Que River is high on the agenda with the site showing modest but high-value deposits of zinc, lead, silver, gold and copper.
- Bass will rely on roads and buildings left at Que River by its previous operators.
- Hellyer was last mined by Aberfoyle in 2000 and new data indicates high-grade copper, lead and zinc targets.

**B**ass has high hopes for its interests in the Mount Read Volcanic belt of northwest Tasmania.

Bubbling with excitement as he outlined his company's exploration game

plan, Bass managing director Mike Rosenstreich said the Perth-based Tasmania-focused explorer was "hunting elephants in elephant country".

"We're in the right neighbourhood," Rosenstreich told *Australia's Mining Monthly*. "[The region has] several very large-scale, dare I say world class-sized ore deposits ... This district really does host some big deposits in what really is a very small area."

With the region already home to major deposits and operational mines, including Zinifex's Rosebery operation and Barrick's Henty gold mine, Rosenstreich expressed confidence that further hidden treasures were present and that Bass would do its utmost to unlock it.

He describes the listed company not as an explorer, but a "discovery" company. "I don't know if we're going to find anything but I know that we're certainly in a very prospective belt and I know that we're giving it every effort," Rosenstreich said. "We're using our smart technology and all of the data that we

can and we are following up by drill testing them."

Although his sights are firmly fixed on first production, Rosenstreich did not attempt to estimate a start date, preferring to give an overview of the company's key Que River and Hellyer projects.

Previously mined by Aberfoyle, the base and precious metal operations at Que River and Hellyer had closed up shop by 1991 and 2000 respectively. With improved commodity prices and geological exploration techniques, and an open-minded approach to mineral targets, Bass plans to reboot both and use the cash flow to develop its other regional prospects.

## Que River

Marching towards that production goal, Bass said it was focusing on the renewed operations at Que River (pronounced 'cue'). "The overall strategy is to get Que River into production to generate cash to fund our exploration," Rosenstreich said.



The Hellyer mill flotation circuit

The explorer has identified modest-sized but high-value deposits of zinc, lead, silver, gold and copper at the Que River site and has formed an alliance with ground support and shaft specialist contractor Mancala for mine development.

Starting in a shallow, high-grade zone for open pits, trial mining is under way with Bass planning to mine both new and remnant pillars at Que River.

Rosenstreich told *AMM* the first of the mine's four planned stages was tipped to have a production rate of "about 130,000 tonnes of ore", a figure Bass hopes to build on in the later stages.

The Que River site is surrounded by Tasmanian forest but has established access roads power is connected and a number of buildings remain in place. Bass said it planned to make the most of the existing infrastructure.

## Hellyer

Up the road from Que River is the old Hellyer mine, which was last mined by Aberfoyle in 2000. While a full study has yet to be completed,



"We're really just waiting for the last of the metallurgical assays to come in and to be interpreted and then that will help us to close an ore sales agreement." — Bass Metals managing director Mike Rosenstreich

Bass is hoping for a swag of base metal goodies with new data already indicating high-grade copper, lead and zinc targets.

Pushing ahead with the development of its base metal inventory, Bass said it was aiming for a “near to medium-term” production profile at Hellyer.

The nearby Hellyer mill, a joint venture between technology company Intec and mining services company Polymetals, is in the trial stages of processing ore from the Hellyer tailings dam to produce a zinc bulk concentrate, having had positive results from Que River’s trial mined ore.

Unlike the highly specific approach taken by Que River and Hellyer’s previous operators, Bass said it would explore broadly. Former Aberfoyle geologist and current Bass senior project geologist Steve Richardson said rather than having fixed ideas about minerals or grade quality, Bass was flexible and open to new opportunities, an approach that was generating much excitement among the exploration and development team.

This open attitude towards mineral exploration has already delivered promising results at the company’s regional Bonds Range project. Earlier this year a drill team struck an impressive intersection of base metal sulphide mineralisation containing lead, zinc and

copper sulphide. Bass geologists said one intercept revealed a discovery of 21% lead found at 91m to 93.5m depth.

Bass, which operates the Bonds Range site with joint venture partner Adamus, has been given the nod for further drilling at the site.


Bass’s aggressive regional exploration and development strategy includes advanced projects at Farrell and Magnet, and early stage projects such as North Rosebery, as well as the Hellyer Exploration Alliance – an intensive joint venture drill project with partner Zinifex.

## Bass vision

Raring to get into production as soon as possible, Rosenstreich said the transition was subject to final results of the processing trial and closing an ore sales agreement.

“We’re really just waiting for the last of the metallurgical assays to come in and to be interpreted and then that will help us to close an ore sales agreement,” he said.

Once testing and off-take issues had been overcome, Rosenstreich said, the transition to production was likely to be a speedy one, aided by the presence of infrastructure and key alliances.

In the meantime Bass continues its hunt for major ore body discoveries, hoping to snare itself an elephant deposit. 



*The grinding mill at the Hellyer processing plant, which is a joint venture between Intec and Polymetals.*