



**Exploration companies must deal with competing interests**

**Mining  
a good  
rapport  
with the  
community**



**DIGGING IT:** Hillgrove Resources mine general manager Cam Schubert and community consultative committee chairman Bob Goering. **Picture:** MICHAEL MARSCHALL

**BUSINESS  
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**CAMERON  
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KANMANTOO in the Adelaide Hills is an idyllic, archetypal hills township.

And it is soon to be home to a copper and gold mining operation churning out six semi-trailers worth of copper concentrate a day.

It's a recipe for conflict, however because of some early planning and good community education, mine owner Hillgrove Resources, and the local community, have been able to work together to overcome a number of issues, such as the possibility of six trucks rumbling daily through the town.

But as the number of mines in South Australia increases - there are 13 approved mines now, up from five in 2004, with a goal to increase the number rapidly - the potential for mining companies and the community to come into conflict increases markedly.

This was thrown into sharp focus this month, when uranium company Marathon

Resources announced its rights to drill in an environmentally sensitive area of the northern Flinders Ranges had been reinstated by the State Government. Marathon's drilling rights were suspended after it was found to have illegally dumped uranium drilling waste near its drill site, which happens to be in the Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary.

Marathon has cleaned up the sites, and argues it should be given the opportunity to assess potential of its uranium deposit.

Green groups and the Sanctuary's owners, the Sprigg family, vehemently oppose any exploration in the area, let alone mining.

The State Government produced a half-baked management plan for the area last year. It was panned by both sides of the argument, and then quietly binned.

There is now speculation the Government plans to turn

the area into a national park.

In much of Australia we are lucky because deposits tend to be in remote areas. SA's Olympic Dam copper, gold and uranium mine, and the Prominent Hill copper and gold mine are good examples.

But the old smelting stacks and mine workings which dot the Adelaide Hills, the mid-north and the Copper Triangle on the Yorke Peninsula are evidence that there are also minerals close to more populated areas. And with global commodities prices at record levels, the incentive to exploit these deposits increases.

Once this starts, there will inevitably be conflicts with other businesses. South Australian Chamber of Mines and Energy chief executive Jason Kuchel stresses that not all mines are large, open cut operations.

There are a variety of op-



tions, including underground and even in-situ leach mining, which dissolves chemicals underground before pumping them back to the surface, which have a lesser impact.

But he agrees the community must be kept in the loop.

"First of all we have a community engagement code of practice," he says. "One of the key things is that we would encourage members to have open communications with residents and other members of the community who might be relevant. And in terms of when they start, to start as early as possible."

Mr Kuchel said this enabled the community to air its concerns at an early stage, allow-

ing them to be assuaged or the issues clearly explained, and could lead to outcomes of benefit to the mining company and locals.

Some issues relate not to mining per se, but to the associated infrastructure.

The fishing industry in Port Lincoln is incensed that Centrex Metals has been given permission to export iron ore via the town, arguing it will damage its clean, green reputation.

Plans for both a bulk commodities port and a desalination plant for BHP Billiton's Olympic Dam expansion to be built at Port Bonython have locals concerned for the amenity of their shacks, but also because the area is a

world-renowned breeding site for cuttlefish.

The rights of farmers and miners to exploit the land is sure to come to a head as exploration in the grain belts of the Eyre and Yorke peninsulas heats up.

All of the projects are at the exploration stage, and tend to time drilling so that it does not conflict with growing times. As deposits progress to the mining stage, however, and with mining taking precedence in legal terms over other land uses, mining companies will have to tread carefully to ensure they keep landholders and the wider community on side.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

### Arkaroola

Marathon Resources was banned from drilling for uranium for three years in the Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary after illegally dumping waste. Premier Mike Rann is now understood to be considering a ban on mining.

### Port Lincoln

The fishing industry has warned that allowing iron ore exports through Port Lincoln will damage the clean, green image of the industry.

### Port Bonython

Plans for both a desalination plant and a bulk commodities port at Port Bonython are a threat to cuttlefish, critics believe. Local shack owners are also not keen on the developments.

### Strathalbyn

Terramin Australia's lead and

zinc mine at Strathalbyn faced opposition initially with locals worried about lead poisoning. A committee was set up to ensure dialogue between the mine owners and the community.



### Kanmantoo

The company which owns the copper and gold operation has averted conflict by setting up a community committee early and listening to its concerns.

### Woodside

Local wineries believe plans to mine gold in the area will destroy their livelihoods.

### Eyre And Yorke

### Peninsula Farming Regions

Mining exploration and farming have so far been able to co-exist, however the possibility for conflict will increase should projects progress to the mining stage.

### Whyalla

This mining town was once notorious for its red dust pollution problem. A change in how iron ore is transported a number of years ago has alleviated the issue.

### Port Pirie

More than three in 10 Port Pirie children still have dangerously high blood lead levels, caused by the Nyrstar lead smelter, despite a lead reduction program which started in 2005.