



## **BHP Billiton Olympic Dam expansion - Shot in the arm for South Australia**

BHP Billiton is seeking the approval of the Australian, South Australian and Northern Territory governments for a significant expansion of its existing mining and processing operation at Olympic Dam in northern South Australia.

Located 560 kilometres north of Adelaide, South Australia, Olympic Dam is a multi-mineral ore body. It is the world's fourth largest remaining copper and gold deposit and the largest known uranium deposit. It also contains significant quantities of silver.

The proposed expansion would be a progressive development, requiring construction activity over a period of 11 years. The project schedule ultimately will depend on the timing and nature of government approvals and the final investment decision of the BHP Billiton Board.

BHP Billiton has announced plans to turn its Olympic Dam mine in South Australia into the largest open cut on earth.

A 4600-page environmental impact statement, released by the company May 1, 2009, set out an ambitious timetable for the conversion of the copper, gold, silver and uranium mine from underground to pit operations.

Work would start as early as April 2010 on the multi-billion-dollar upgrade.

Under BHP Billiton's best-case scenario, excavation of the 1km-deep mine pit, and possibly construction of a pipeline to supply a gas power plant, would be under way by July next year.

By that time, a mini-city known as Hiltaba Village would be rising in the desert to house the thousands of workers needed for the project. This would be in addition to the expansion of the existing township of Roxby Downs.

The mine's workforce would double from 4000 to 8000 when it

reached full capacity, with 2500 additional houses to be built for permanent workers. The operation representing the world's biggest single producer of uranium and one of the biggest of copper.

The open cut envisaged by BHP Billiton at Olympic Dam would become the biggest man-made hole on the planet and yield \$1 trillion worth of ore over its century-long life, more than \$200 million per annum of which would be paid in royalties to the South Australian Government. Production would lift six-fold from 12 million tonnes of ore annually to 72 million tonnes after 2020.

"We will work with BHP Billiton to maximise the number of jobs here in South Australia" The South Australian Premier, Mike Rann said.

South Australian Mineral Resources Development Minister Paul Holloway yesterday said the Government was not blinded by the wealth on offer at Olympic Dam.

"If there are issues we do not believe have been addressed properly, then we will ask BHP to reconsider them and make appropriate amendments," Mr Holloway said.

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