

NEWS FROM THE BREAK: TTR appeal confirmed, new MinEx workshops

Eamon Rood - Mon, 14 Jan 2019

Further court action for Trans-Tasman Resources, new health and safety workshops to be run by MinEx and WorkSafe, and \$20 million in road safety upgrades are among the news items that cropped up since *Inside Resources'* last newsletter before the Christmas break.

The Court of Appeal granted Trans-Tasman Resources leave to appeal a High Court ruling that its marine discharge consent to mine for ironsand in the South Taranaki Bight should not have been granted.

The basis of TTR's appeal is that the Environmental Protection Authority's approach in granting the consent, which came with a comprehensive set of conditions to protect the environment and existing interests, was in line with the law.

All parties are now required to lodge their Notices of Appeal by January 24.

TTR has spent \$65 million so far on its plan to mine up to 50 million tonnes of seabed material offshore from Patea, yielding up to 5 million tonnes of processed iron ore concentrate. Its first application was rejected by the EPA in June 2014.

In opposition are several fisheries interests - including Talley's Group, two South Taranaki iwi, and environmental groups including Forest and Bird and Kiwis Against Seabed Mining.

In August 2017, a different decision-making committee narrowly approved TTR's second application, which was appealed by the opposing groups. That appeal was upheld by the High Court in August last year.

Road safety programme

Yesterday the Government announced \$20m for safety upgrades to state highways in Manawatu, Whanganui, Gisborne, Hawke's Bay and the West Coast.

It is part of a \$1.4bn programme over the next three years targeting high-risk roads around the country, including \$600m-\$700m for state highway improvements. Improvements have already been made to rural roads in Northland, Taranaki, Otago and Southland.

Associate Transport Minister Julie Anne Genter said the 11 rural state highways being targeted have risks like sharp corners and narrow stretches.

"The goal is to prioritise proven technology like rumble strips which surprisingly reduce fatal run-off road crashes by up to 42 per cent, shoulder widening at high risk sites can reduce serious crashes by up to 35 per cent."

Genter said some of the upgrades will be done quickly over the summer, such as rumble strips, shoulder widening, and improved signage.

MinEx confirms new workshops

The MinEx board recently approved 20 regional workshops for 2019, building on the success of the workshops run since July 2017.

The new workshops – which will be co-hosted with WorkSafe - will start in Palmerston North in February and finish in Whakatane on November 7. Three centres which have never hosted a MinEx workshop will be on the calendar next year – Rotorua, North Canterbury and Taumarunui.

MinEx CEO Wayne Scott said that this year's workshops will differ from previous sessions, with a focus on operating and safety systems, emergency management, leadership and legislation. Attendees will be able to pick up eight hours to go towards Continuing Professional Development. There will be a "modest" cost to attend.

MinEx is also producing more booklets and fact sheets in 2019, with topics including mental health and dust management, following on from the one most recently produced on slope stability. Copies are available on request.

Pike River re-entry

The Pike River Recovery Agency is recruiting an electrical technician as it gets closer to re-entering the West Coast underground coal mine, expected to take place next month.

The agency's chief operating officer Dinghy Pattinson says the technician will report to the team's electrical superintendent, and will manage and complete an assigned electrical improvement programme of electrical design, from inception to commissioning.

"This important role includes producing electrical schematics, selection of instruments and cabling, schedules and documentation, obtaining quotes, liaising and managing contractors. The person will be based with our Pike River mine team near Greymouth.



"We need someone with underground experience, qualifications and a full NZ Electrical Licence, preferably with a mining endorsement," Pattinson said.

Chatham continues investor talks

Chatham Rock Phosphate is continuing talks with Capital Trust Group, which could see the prospective seabed phosphate miner receive a USD\$10m capital injection upon acquiring the New Zealand-based blockchain firm.

Following initial talks in November, CRP CEO Chris Castle said the "wheels are certainly turning at CTG", noting the recent appointment of former Islamic Bank of Thailand President Dheerasak Suwannayos as CEO.

"However, and partly due to the imposition of the holiday season, their process is taking longer than they (or we) expected," Castle said.

Chatham Rock Phosphate is working on its second application for marine consent to extract phosphate from seabed nodules off the Chatham Rise, which it says can provide New Zealand's agricultural sector with a supply of ultra-low cadmium pastoral phosphate fertiliser.

Three Kings sale on the cards

Fletcher Building confirmed that it has received both "solicited and unsolicited bids" for its Three Kings quarry development, in response to rumours that it is looking to sell the Auckland site for \$150m.

Last week *BusinessDesk* quoted a Fletcher spokesperson as saying: "We continue to receive solicited and unsolicited offers for a number of our sites, including Three Kings, and deal with these on the basis that, as a land developer as well as a residential building company, we will always consider the best return for our shareholders."

However the spokesperson declined to confirm the \$150m figure.

Fletcher has planned \$1.2b to build between 1,200 and 1,500 residential homes over a 10-year period at the old quarry site.

"We have established an agreed master-plan for the precinct, including two plan changes, and a land exchange, and are continuing to fill the quarry in accordance with these plans," the spokesperson said.