



Super Pit top of the heap in mining news

sulphate of potash hopeful last year toasted a \$300m raising to develop its Lake Way project near Wiluna.

That means Salt Lake remains the frontrunner in the race to become Australia's first commercial producer of the high-value fertiliser from March.

7 NORTON GOLD FIELDS

Chinese corporate giant Zijin

Mining Group last year revealed it was planning a \$552m spending spree on its Norton Gold Fields operations near Kalgoorlie-Boulder.

The cash splash will be used to bankroll a two-pronged strategy that will create about 220 jobs from 2021.

6 IGO

IGO's lithium grab received a ringing endorsement from

Record gold prices underpinned surging confidence across the region's mining sector last year.

Against the backdrop of the coronavirus pandemic, escalating international trade tensions and a volatile political climate abroad, gold's lustre shone brighter than ever as investors flocked to the safe haven.

For a region that takes its name from the precious metal

and proudly claims to be Australia's gold capital, the Goldfields was ideally placed to navigate its way through the train wreck that was 2020.

But mining did not just survive the crisis—it flourished.

With a wave of international and domestic investors throwing money at an industry that was powering through the pandemic,

the sector had a distinct swagger.

That was keenly felt in the Goldfields, where a broad spectrum of commodities took advantage of easy capital raisings to accelerate exploration efforts and bring new projects online.

Modelling last month by the Australian Resources and Energy Group has conservatively forecast more than 3200 mining jobs in the next four years across 16 new or expanding Goldfields mining operations.

That is based on Commonwealth data for "likely" or "committed" projects and does not include several significant project developments showing promise.

But the data does include Australia's most famous hole in the ground, where a ramp-up by the Super Pit's proud new

owners will result in 700 new jobs from next year. And as we

reflect on the Goldfields' top 10 mining stories for 2020, the Super Pit stands head and shoulders above all else for the second year in succession.

10 AUSTRALIAN POTASH

Australian Potash wrapped up buyers for all future annual production after signing its final offtake agreement in November that will see its product distributed across the globe.

9 BELLEVUE GOLD

Bellevue Gold got more than it asked for when it rattled the tin for \$120 million in July before walking away with \$135m after being swamped by super-keen investors.

8 SALT LAKE POTASH

The northern Goldfields

JASON MENNELL

shareholders, with the mixed-metals miner's stock soaring 24.04 per cent on December 11.

That came after the company revealed a \$1.9 billion deal with Tianqi Lithium that will see IGO take a 25 per cent indirect share of the world's biggest hard-rock lithium mine at Greenbushes in WA's South West.

It will also see IGO snap up a 49 per cent stake in a shuttered



lithium hydroxide plant at Kwinana.

5 RED 5

Red 5's bid to propel itself into the realms of Australia's mid-tier goldminers received a shot in the arm when it laid its cards on the table in September.

The detailed plan for a standalone plant at its King of The Hills mine near Leonora points to a 16-year mine life employing 450 people during peak construction, with an ongoing 300 during production.

Underpinned by a 2.4 million-ounce ore reserve, Red 5 said that would catapult KOTH into the top 10 of Australia's largest endowed goldmines.

4 LYNAS CORPORATION

Kalgoorlie-Boulder is on the cusp of becoming Australia's critical minerals industry epicentre after the signing of a landmark lease agreement for a rare earths downstream processing plant in the city.

The sublease agreement that would enable a \$500m cracking and leaching plant to be built this year was formalised between the City of Kalgoorlie- Boulder and Lynas Corporation in August.

It marked a watershed moment for the plans expected to create up to 500 jobs during construction, with an ongoing 100 jobs for a 20-year-plus life expectancy.

3 FIRST QUANTUM MINERALS

The revival of the Ravensthorpe nickel project that had lain dormant for more than two years marked a seismic shift for the small community of about 900 at Hopetoun.

Creating almost 500 jobs through those directly employed by the company and contractors, the Canadian mining giant awarded more than \$70m worth of contracts to local businesses

as the operations gradually came back online from January.

The restart has seen businesses in Hopetoun flourish, with the operation also keeping the Port of Esperance busy with a steady stream of imports and exports.

2 MINCOR RESOURCES

Mincor last year heralded the dawn of a new era for Kambalda that will see the town's nickel mines come roaring back to life.

The emerging nickel producer

in November toasted the first portal firing at its promising greenfields nickel deposit at Cassini.

That came after a final investment decision that will see Mincor also revive its mothballed nickel mines at Kambalda after they were put into care and maintenance during a sustained downturn in the nickel price in 2016.

The project creating more than 200 jobs expects first nickel concentrate in 2022.

1 SUPER PIT

Just as it did in 2019, the Super Pit stole the show again this year.

That came about when its joint-venture owners in October revealed a \$16m merger that would bring the famous Golden Mile under single ownership for the first time in its 125-year history.

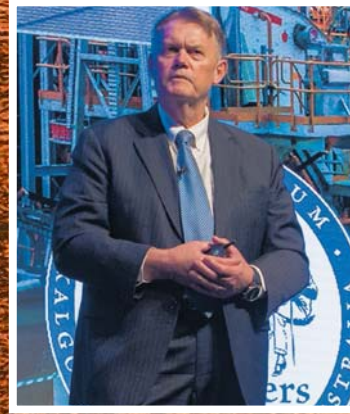
The merger by Northern Star Resources and Saracen Mineral Holdings is expected to be finalised in February and will propel the merged entity into the world's top-10 gold producers, creating 700 new jobs from next year.

The merger came after each miner took a 50 per cent holding in the Super Pit in 2019 after the previous foreign owners placed their stakes on the market.

Already back in the black after shelling out a collective \$2.2b for the asset, Northern Star and Saracen shared the dealer of the year gong at last year's Diggers & Dealers Mining Forum.



Salt Lake Potash managing director Tony Swierczuk.



IGO CEO Peter Bradford.
Picture: Tom Zaubmayr



Northern Star's Bill Beament and Saracen's Raleigh Finlayson.
Picture: Iain Gillespie



Mincor Resources' David Southam
Picture: Jason Mennell



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