

Historic prospects providing impetus for New bid to uncover West Coast's wealth

By SEAN FORD

A RECENTLY listed company plans to work historic North-East deposits to pay for exploration at promising targets south of Strahan.

Kingston-based Macquarie Harbour Mining will use winter to plan a significant West Coast drilling campaign, expected to start late in the year.

"Prior work in the region suggests there's very good potential," executive director Ben Mead said yesterday from the US, where he is meeting equipment suppliers.

"We're very positive. "We have significant company-making targets, enduring targets, on the West Coast."

If everything comes together, the company hopes to develop what Mr Mead called "an enduring mining centre" to the south of Macquarie Harbour.

MHM is targeting iron ore, copper, gold, nickel, zinc and lead on the West Coast.

Its main West Coast targets are:

- Thomas Creek (copper and gold), which it says has mineralisation in a similar style to the veteran West Coast Mt Lyell mine;

- Hibbs and Birchs, including a 30km area with nickel sulfide mineralisation the company says is in similar style to Allegiance's Avebury deposit, which led to a major mine development, plus gold, chromium and platinum group metals;

- Double Cove (copper, gold, nickel, zinc and iron ore); and
- the Strahan Nickel Zinc



EFFICIENCY: Rogers Engineering Services general manager Simon Wells shows off the mobile alluvial tin sampling plant the company is constructing for Macquarie Harbour Mining.

project to explore extensions of a known nickel sulfide mineralisation south of Macquarie Harbour and 25km of the famed Mt Read Volcanics mineral belt.

Mr Mead said the company was looking to establish a base at Strahan.

"Next week we're chartering a helicopter and we'll be spending about a week on the ground visiting sites and surface sampling."

He said the team would take a Niton Analyser, a hand-held device that looks like a hair dryer and uses a form of X-ray, to assess rock.

"It gives you grades of different metals."

In the North-East, Mr Mead said the company planned to extract tin from its Mussestro project and gold from Gladstone to help fund the West Coast work.

It will also apply some interesting technology in the North-East. Hobart-based Rogers En-

gineering Services is close to completing a mobile gravity tin plant for MHM. It will weigh about three tonnes, light enough for a standard four-wheel drive to tow it from site to site on a trailer.

"The plant's mobility enables it to move to each sample point within the project area efficiently," Rogers general manager Simon Wells said. "The plant is suitable for gold, tin and alluvial materials."

He said Rogers had hopes for further Tasmanian sales of the units and of developing an export business with them.

Mr Mead said the plant could process up to five tonnes of dirt an hour.

Mr Wells said the unit — valued at about \$240,000 — was cost competitive against mainland quotes MHM had received.

He said Rogers was also looking at a market for punts to move exploration equipment.

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