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Mine prospects increase with big signing of Swan

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By MATT NICHOLLS

A PROPOSED silica mine that will give Traditional Owners a direct slice of the pie has Cooktown and Hope Vale residents excited about its prospects.

Diatreme Resources hopes to build a silica mine around 20km north of Cooktown that would provide around 80 permanent jobs and have a lifespan of more than 20 years.

This month, the fledgling company received a shot in the arm when former Treasurer and political heavyweight Wayne Swan agreed to join Diatreme as chairman of the board.

CEO Neil McIntyre said it was a huge coup for the ASX-listed company.

“We are transitioning and we were looking at adding weight and value to the board,” he said.

“We had a hit list of prominent Queenslanders to attract as an independent chairman. He was at the top of the list.”

Mr McIntyre said he wasn’t confident of recruiting the high profile former politician, but said he was thrilled when Mr Swan jumped on board.

“He has a great deal of fondness for the Cape and one of his first trips up here was with Gough Whitlam. He has a good feel for Cape York and he sees how positive this project would be for the region.”

Mr Swan enjoyed a lengthy

career in federal politics, serving as treasurer from 2007 to 2013 and Deputy Prime Minister from 2010 to 2013.

“Diatreme has shown enormous foresight in its approach towards the Traditional Owners, giving them a direct stake in the project at an early stage to ensure they receive its economic benefits,” Mr Swan said.

“I will be working to ensure the company delivers these benefits to all the community, while also minimising its environmental impact and protecting worker health and safety.

“I also will be striving to ensure successful stakeholder engagement for Diatreme, with such support critical to the company earning a social licence to operate.”

Speaking from a mining conference in Noosa, Mr McIntyre said the company’s proposed Galalar Silica Project was not yet a done deal and required environmental and Traditional Owner approvals.

“We hope to complete those steps in the next six months or so,” he said.

“The preliminary feasibility study hit the market days ago.

“The silica product we would be mining would be directly for solar panels, with around 75 million tonnes of silica ready to be exported.”

The CEO said silica mining was a “really clean mining process that uses no chemicals”.

“We have gone through the first part of the environmental impact study which involves both the state and federal government because of the proximity to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park,” Mr McIntyre said.

“We believe there will be zero impact on the reef.”

Negotiations are also ongoing with the Hope Vale Congress Aboriginal Corporation, the prescribed body corporate for the clan groups who belong to the land of the proposed mine.

Diatreme has offered the clan groups a 12.5 stake in ownership of the mining operation.

“They’ll get the benefit of equity and get a seat at the table and have input,” Mr McIntyre said last week.

“It’s important to us that the Traditional Owners have a genuine interest in seeing the project do well.

“We also want to stick our necks out and aim for a 60 per cent Indigenous employment rate, which would make us a leader in the Cape.”

The CEO said the proposed ownership structure and ambitious employment targets were key to winning Mr Swan’s presence on the board.

Diatreme believes that around three billion solar panels could be created from the silica from the Galalar project.

Initial plans would be to ship 1.3 million tonnes of product per



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year from Nob Point.

“We would use a barge facility at Nob Point, which is supported by the Traditional Owners, and use a process called transhipping out of Cape Flattery,” Mr McIntyre said.



Diatreme CEO Neil McIntyre.



Diatreme Resources has been testing sites around 20km north of Cooktown for silica quality.



New Diatreme chairman Wayne Swan.