

Press release

Rio Tinto's Yandicoogina becomes first mine in Australia to produce 50 million tonnes a year

30 December 2009

Rio Tinto's Yandicoogina, Australia's largest-producing iron ore mine, has broken the 50 million tonne mark for annual production for the first time.

The milestone, all the more unexpected following the slump in demand for iron ore in early 2009 together with severe flood-damage to rail operations, highlighted the substantial gains achieved through Rio Tinto's integrated network over the year.

The mine passed 50 million tonnes per year of product on 29 December.

Iron Ore chief executive Sam Walsh applauded the milestone as a tribute to efficiency gains made during the year.

"The 50 million tonnes per year mark is a worthy effort, made more notable still given that by April the mine was producing at a rate only sufficient to record 40 million tonnes for the year. To overcome the twin obstacles presented by the GFC impact and the flooding has been a major achievement."

Yandicoogina is situated in a rich channel iron deposit 95km north-west of Newman, in the Pilbara region of Western Australia. Opened in 1998, though originally conceived on a far smaller scale, its first full year of operations produced 10.7 million tonnes.

Since its most recent expansion through Junction South East in 2007 and 2008, Yandicoogina has been ramping up towards its nameplate annual capacity of 52 million tonnes. Last year it produced 45.6 million tonnes of saleable product.

Yandicoogina ore is marketed separately from Rio Tinto's Pilbara Blend and Robe River products. The pisolite ore is highly sought after by steel mills for its ability to improve the smelting of other ores. It is successfully marketed in Rio Tinto's major Asian destinations, where its sinter-efficient properties enhance its value in use in smelting fines.

About Rio Tinto

Rio Tinto is a leading international mining group headquartered in the UK, combining Rio Tinto plc, a London and NYSE listed company, and Rio Tinto Limited, which is listed on the Australian Securities Exchange.

Rio Tinto's business is finding, mining, and processing mineral resources. Major products are aluminium, copper, diamonds, energy (coal and uranium), gold, industrial minerals (borax, titanium dioxide, salt, talc) and iron ore. Activities span the world but are strongly represented in Australia and North America with significant businesses in South America, Asia, Europe and southern Africa.

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