



High metal prices and new technologies serve to boost prospects for ventures

# This boom's only just begun: experts

By SEAN FORD

ONCE part of Australia's "rust belt", Tasmania may spend years, even decades, in relative clover thanks largely to a mining boom which shows no sign of ending.

High metal prices and improved technologies are helping companies like Bass Metals make the most of mining sites previously abandoned as uneconomic.

They are also providing Bass Metals funds to concentrate on its main aim, finding major ore bodies and bringing them into production.

The job-creating activi-

ties of companies like Bass Metals (Que River, Hellyer and other West Coast and North-West sites), Hellyer Mill joint venture partners Polymetals and Intech and a host of miners and explorers active in Tasmania are signs of things to come, it seems.

Especially with China's continued strength and the rise of India.

"The best comparison I've heard, analysts described it as similar to the reconstruction of Europe after World War II, and that's just China," Tasmanian Minerals Council executive director Terry Long said.

"China wanting 20 per cent of the OECD standard of living by the year 2020 will stretch the world's capacity, without India and other Asian countries and the US and the normal demand countries."

Mr Long said many Tasmanian deposits had been closed for economic reasons when prices were lower and were now opportunities.

Often there are opportunities for fast-moving junior miners and explorers.

"It's a world of opportunity for the juniors; it's generally acknowledged in

the exploration and development of small ore bodies, they move fast, respond to market opportunities and are well suited to that sort of environment."

He said Tasmania was not yet subject to widespread mining skills shortages, partly because of its attractions as a base for miners.

That was compared to many sites on the mainland where workers had to fly in and fly out and work eight to 10 days at a stretch.

That was not needed in Tasmania, where workers could live relatively close to mines.



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**HIGH HOPES:** (Clockwise from top) A conveyor belt will carry Que River ore from the mine to the Hellyer mill for processing. Bass Metals manger Mike Rosenstreich describes the proposed milling venture at Hellyer. The ball mill at Hellyer crushes ore before processing. Minerals are separated using a flotation process to extract zinc, lead, silver, copper and gold. Pictures: Grant Wells.