

# Auroch eyes nickel recovery

**Josh Chiat**

The incoming owner of two dormant nickel projects in the northern Goldfields has predicted the long-struggling commodity will be a strong performer over the next decade.

While the industry has been hammered for years, those in the sector are increasingly hopeful the supply-demand balance is shifting in favour of nickel sulphide producers and explorers.

South Australian-focused base metals explorer Auroch Minerals has latched onto that new-found optimism, paying \$1.4 million in shares and \$100,000 in cash to Minotaur Exploration to secure its Saints and Leinster nickel projects.

With almost 30,000 tonnes in nickel resources presenting a headstart for the explorer, chief executive Aidan Platel said nickel's re-emergence as a globally significant commodity inspired the purchase.

"I think we recognised a good eight to 10 months ago that nickel was going to come on strong," he said.

"It's still within our strategy of being focused on base metals in

Australia and abroad.

"Nickel was something we recognised was going to be one of the better commodities for the next five to 10 years.

"Obviously WA is the best place to be in Australia for nickel, so we kept that strategy."

Saints is about 80km north of Kalgoorlie-Boulder and 15km along strike from Scotia, which was discovered during the first nickel boom and produced more than 30,000t of nickel at 2.2 per cent before an underground mine collapse halted operations in 1977.

Like Scotia, its 1.05 million tonne resource grades at a reasonable 2 per cent (21,400t of nickel metal), with a hint of copper and cobalt sweetening the deal.

At Leinster, the Horn deposit has a JORC2004-compliant resource of 8300t which needs to be proved up to 2012 compliance with modern exploration. Mr Platel, whose resume includes a stint with former Brazilian nickel miner Mirabela Nickel, said that project had enormous upside, with Auroch planning to be aggressive.

"I think we have to be fairly aggressive straight away, we have some expenditures to meet," he

said. "We have some pretty exciting targets such as the Valdez target, which is a 1200m x 450m EM plate that has one hole into it which has scraped the top of it and had 0.5 per cent nickel at the bottom of the hole.

Minotaur acquired the assets in its 2013 merger with Breakaway Resources but put them on the block in 2017 in a bid to exit WA.

It will retain an interest in the projects with a roughly 18 per cent stake in Auroch.



**Minotaur Exploration carries out testing at the Saints nickel-cobalt project.** Picture: Minotaur Exploration