Latin temperament: How Aussies make their mark

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Australian juniors in Latin America: A road less travelled
New surveys designed to open up Guyana

TheGuyaneseGovernmenthopesanewseriesofmappingandsamplingsurveyswillincentiviseexplorers to invest in the South American country.

Guyana is widely considered to be highly prospective for gold thanks to the presence of greenstone belts along the Guiana Shield but the country has largely failed to attract the same level of investment as other jurisdictions due to a lack of geological information and challenges regarding infrastructure and logistics.

Guyana Minister of Natural Resources, Simona Broomes, said the new mapping and sampling surveys would allow explorers and miners to overcome the information gap currently in the country.

“For investors, the reason we are looking at quantification is because we want to have our doors open. We have more than 40 minerals but currently we don’t have the relevant information on them. In the future, when investors come, the data will be there and well provided.”

Broomes said the mapping and sampling would start in July with initial focus being North West province. To support the exercise, Broomes is planning to add more geologists to the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission.

The Government is also intent on tightening safety within its prolific small-scale gold mining sector. Small-scale miners produce more than 700,000 oz per gold and while the industry is regulated, Broomes said safety was still an issue.

“Guyana has a challenge in safety in small-scale mining,” she said. “The Government has established wardens to enhance safety and reduce and eventually eliminate fatalities in the sector. We have received support from companies such as [ASX-listed] Troy Resources [Ltd] because we have taken note of Australia’s safety laws and regulations and would like to replicate them.”

The Guyanese Government is also planning to organise the smallest of the artisanal miners into syndicates, allowing them to negotiate more effectively with foreign investors.

“We would encourage smaller Australian miners to work with smaller scale mining groups,” Broomes said. Foreign investors have previously been put off by Guyana’s patchwork of licences but Broomes said the new policies would ensure there was no confusion.

“We are looking to make sure the licences don’t overlap because this was a challenge previously faced by miners. The land rights commission will make it a safer place for investors.”

Alicantominerals Ltd is one of the most active explorers in Guyana and speaking directly after Broomes, managing director Travis Schwertfeger welcomed the Government’s policy focus.

“We like the way the Government is going with the syndicates,” Schwertfeger said.

He was also supportive of the Government’s efforts regarding licensing and CSR initiatives and support for foreign investors.

“For us, community relations are excellent,” he said. “The Government is always supportive and our land position very prevalent.”

Explorers and miners in other jurisdictions can struggle with artisanal mining activity but Schwertfeger said that the Guyanese sector was willing to work with commercial-scale operators.

“There have been a lot of discoveries made by small scale miners in Guyana and they can be useful in exploration. This is particularly useful here because the exploration footprint in the country is not large given there has been so little modern exploration,” he said.

Alicantominerals has been exploring on its Arakaka gold project for four years with Barrick Gold Corp last year entering the project as JV partner. Schwertfeger said Barrick’s arrival has allowed Alicantominerals to begin spending its own money on the recently acquired Ianna gold project, 30km south of Arakaka.

“Ianna is open at depth and along strike,” he said. “There is good continuity within the diorite but we haven't assessed the margins – which is where we've had success finding high-grade mineralisation at Arakaka. Our understanding of the shape and dimensions of the diorite have changed so we are keen to test an area where we have soil samples of plus-5 g/t.

“We intend to test the margins of the diorite where there are plus-5 g/t soil samples. We also have magnetics and with auger drilling changed our understanding of the shape of the diorite.”

– Dominic Piper