

The Toodyay Herald

Your locally owned
community newspaper
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5000 copies circulating in Toodyay, West Toodyay, Goomalling, Bolgart, Calingiri, Morangup, Northam, Coondle, Hoddys Well, Wattening, Dewars Pool, Culham, Bejoording, Nunile, Julimar, Bakers Hill, Clackline, Woorloo, Wundowie, Gidgegannup and local districts.

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Miner struggles to win community trust

Environment a key issue but many know little or nothing about Julimar forest drilling

Michael Sinclair-Jones

MOST people don't fully trust Chalice Mining to act in the best interest of the local community, according to a new company survey of plans to mine Julimar Conservation Park and nearby farmlands.

More than 20 per cent of Toodyay residents said they don't trust Chalice "at all", another 18 per cent said they trust the miner only "slightly" and a further 36 per cent said Chalice can be trusted just "moderately".

Only a quarter (25 per cent) of all respondents said they trusted Chalice "very much" or "extremely".

To a question "I will not support a potential future mine in general regardless of what the company says or does", 56 per cent – the survey's largest response – said "not at all".

The company said the double-negative response was "actually positive" for Chalice.

It said mixing positive and negative statements in surveys was a "tried and tested" approach to limit bias and the response was "good/ positive" for Chalice.

The company said it was consistent with responses to another question which showed that 58 per cent of people were "moderately to extremely" supportive of mining on Chalice-owned private farmland south of Julimar Road.

"We are encouraged that 61 per cent of respondents have moderate to extremely high levels of trust in Chalice," the company said.

"This compares favourably with the level of trust in Federal and State Governments and is typical of the level of trust respondents have for the mining industry generally".

The company's "Local Voices" survey of 283 local residents in April offered a \$10 donation to local community groups for every response it received.

Chalice said it generated \$2476 in community donations after some people

chose to opt out of the donor offer.

The miner says it has donated a total of \$250,000 in two years to local community events such as the Moondyne Festival, Toodyay Show, International Food Fair and Christmas Street Party as well as to local volunteer fire brigades, the Country Women's Association, Marsupial Mammals and Pappas Wildlife, miniature railway, Toodyay Recreation Centre and sports clubs.

It provided a further \$4.73 million to Chalice contractors and "the local economy".

A recent statement to the Australian Stock Exchange valued the company at \$2.5 billion, with \$145 million in cash reserves.

Chalice announced a 50 per cent increase in the size of its "world class" Julimar deposit in March and a "strong option" to build a kilometre-wide pit to extract three million tonnes of ore on private land bounded by Keating Road, Plunkett Road, Beach Road and Julimar Road.

The company also announced "enormous growth potential" in a much larger area being drilled in Julimar State Forest, which is a State-registered conservation park.

"The need to decarbonise the global economy will underpin long-term demand for the green metals at Julimar," the company told an investor forum in June.

Chalice said earlier that it was seeking new partners to mine and process millions of tonnes of Julimar ore in future decades.

Last month's community survey results showed that only a quarter of respondents knew "much" or a "great deal" about Chalice's current exploration activities.

A third said they had "some" knowledge, and 41 per cent said they had "none" or only "a little" knowledge of it.

A total of 81 per cent of people surveyed said the environment was "very" or "extremely" important.

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Survey shows many don't trust miner

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CHALICE Mining CEO Alex Dorsch said community consultation was integral to his company's approach.

"We are committed to being open and transparent with the local community at all times," he said.

"We are encouraged by the fact that the majority of respondents to our initial community survey support the potential development of a mine at Gonnevillie, which is located on Chalice-owned farmland, given the significant benefits this would generate for local communities and the State.

"We will continue to broaden and improve our consultation with the community as we progress our project."

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Corporate spin

CHALICE Mining may be sitting on a massive mining bonanza in Julimar but the Perth-based company still has a long way to go to gain greater local community trust.

The miner claims a trust level similar to that for governments and other miners.

However, a recent company survey of local community attitudes suggests more needs to be done.

Of particular concern is that nearly half of the 283 people surveyed said they knew little or nothing about Chalice's current mineral exploration program.

This is mostly beyond public view because evidence of the vast ore deposit discovered in Julimar is hard to spot while driving on local roads and forest tracks.

This may be because what Chalice tells the Australian Stock Exchange and global markets is different to what readers see in local leaflets and newspaper advertising.

The market reports contain detailed information about how many holes have been drilled, what they have discovered and economic projections about the huge wealth that lies beneath the ground.

On share values alone, the company is worth \$2.5 billion.

Most local people say the environment is "very" or "extremely" important but few would be readers of finance newspapers, mining magazines and online reports to know what is really going on in Julimar.

Chalice says it has spent \$250,000 in two years on donations to local not-for-profit volunteer organisations, which is welcome in our relatively small community.

We also welcome Chalice's monthly full-page *Herald* advertisements which help fund this newspaper to serve the local community with news and information.

The ads generally cover local community issues in much the same way that US mining giant Alcoa sought to gain public support in the 1970s for open-cut bauxite mining in the southern Darling Ranges.

May was an exception when Chalice responded to an April *Herald* headline "Chalice flags open cut mine" which quoted extensively from a March statement to the Australian Stock Exchange.

Public relations is an integral part of any successful business, and Chalice has plenty of cash on hand – \$145 million according to latest reports – to get its message across.

If the company was more up front locally about its global corporate strategy, perhaps it would gain more community trust.

Ignorance is not always bliss.

*Michael Sinclair-Jones
Editor*