

Mine offers positive future for FNQ jobs

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Metallica Minerals chairman Theo Psaros says local employment will be an important factor in the Cape Flattery silica sands project should it go ahead.

METALLICA Minerals is about to launch the latest phase of its Cape Flattery silica sands project with local and Cairns jobs in the offing.

Company chairman Theo Psaros toured the region over the last week in preparation of 82 exploration holes to be drilled in July.

"We completed a small drilling project last year and we have plans to inspect the resource," he said.

Early indications are that the silica content of the sand at Cape Flattery was of a high grade, given its proximity to Mitsubishi's existing operation that exports three million tonnes per year.

"A ninety nine per cent silica content is very impressive," Mr Psaros said.

"We're confident in the quality and are looking at new shipping options."

The company is also exploring the feasibility of constructing a jetty in the designated port area to ensure transport of the high value product.

High purity silica sand is used in the production of solar panels along with flat glass, container glass, fibre optics, LCD panels, LED lights and even medical vials used to store vaccines.

Given its early stages, Mr Psaros said it was too soon to estimate a dollar value on the project.

"We are committed to the project," he said.

"The demand is well understood, there is not enough high quality sand in the world; the market will be there."

Mitsubishi's operation has come under fire from the Walalmbaar Aboriginal Corporation, which claimed the company had not been accessible to its traditional owners.

Mitsubishi has not commented on the claims.

Mr Psaros said Metallica had been forward in its dealings with traditional owners, and said local employment was an important factor in the mine if it progressed.

"We were very clear from day one that our company is wanting to be a member of their community, not the other way around, and we signed agreements with two corporations early on and they have agreed to the drill," he said.

"We very much want to ensure those near the project be considered (for employment), and we would not leave out those living in Cairns."

Metallica Minerals recently announced a renounceable Rights Issue to raise up to \$4,865,661 and has brought on board Brisbane-based engineering firm Ilwella.

"We are committed to being a long-term shareholder and look forward to seeing this project in production," Ilwella chief investment officer Quentin Flannery said.

The project is about 200km north of Cairns.