

BHP BILLITON LTD

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BHP BILLITON ANNOUNCES CLOSURE OF PERING LEAD ZINC MINE, STH AFRICA

BHP Billiton Base Metals today announced that the Pering Mine in South Africa will cease operations at the end of 2002. The mine was originally expected to close in early 2004, however, recent market conditions have necessitated that this be accelerated.

Brad Mills, President, BHP Billiton Base Metals commented, "The Pering Mine has been in operation for 16 years but the ore reserve is now nearly depleted. Pering will continue to operate at maximum plant capacity until the economically mineable reserve is depleted, which it is estimated will be by December 2002. Thereafter full scale closure and reclamation activities will commence."

Over the life of the mine, Pering produced approximately 39 000 tonnes of zinc concentrate and 6 000 tonnes of lead concentrate per annum.

The social and environmental impact of the mine's closure has been and will continue to be a focal point of the closure plan. Together with the trade unions, a significant effort is being placed on the development of a social plan aimed at reducing the economic impact on Pering's 193 employees. The social plan focuses on non-mining related job creation projects to assist in the sustainability of the Reivilo town and the local community.

Further news and information can be found on our Internet site: www.bhpbilliton.com

Australia

Andrew Nairn, Investor Relations

Tel: +61 3 9609 3952

Mobile: +61 408 313 259

mailto:Andrew.W.Nairn@bhpbilliton.com

Mandy Frostick, Media Relations

Tel: +61 3 9609 4157

Mobile: +61 419 546 245

mailto:Mandy.J.Frostick@bhpbilliton.com

United States

Francis McAllister, Investor Relations

Tel: +1 713 961 8625

Mobile: +1 713 480 3699

mailto:Francis.R.McAllister@bhpbilliton.com

United Kingdom

Mark Lidiard, Investor & Media Relations

Tel: +44 20 7747 3956

mailto:Mark.T.Lidiard@bhpbilliton.com

South Africa

Michael Campbell, Investor & Media Relations

Tel: +27 11 376 3360

Mobile: +27 82 458 2587

mailto:Michael.J.Campbell@bhpbilliton.com

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BHP Billiton Limited ABN 49 004 028 077

Registered in Australia

Registered Office: 600 Bourke Street Melbourne Victoria 3000

Telephone +61 3 9609 3333 Facsimile +61 3 9609 3015

BHP Billiton Plc Registration number 3196209

Registered in England and Wales

Registered Office: 1-3 Strand London WC2N 5HA United Kingdom

Telephone +44 20 7747 3800 Facsimile +44 20 7747 3900

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