

Canada know-how assists in Australian nickel production

Back in 1966 when the Australian company Western Mining Corporation Limited discovered nickel sulphides at Kambalda, W.A., an association developed with the Canadian firm, Sherritt Gordon Mines Limited, that led to the employment of the Sherritt Gordon ammonia leach refining process at Western Mining's Kwinana nickel refinery.

The company was looking for a process that would produce refined nickel direct from concentrate with a maximum recovery of metals and by-products. They chose the Sherritt Gordon process for the following reasons: the nickel was produced as a fine high grade powder; copper and cobalt were produced as saleable sulphide products, sulphur would be converted into a fertilizer (ammonium sulphate), and only a small quantity of residue would be produced.

Prior to the commissioning of the Kwinana refinery a contract for toll refining of nickel concentrates was entered into by the two companies and the first shipment left Esperance during the latter half of 1967 to be

toll refined at Sherritt Gordon's Fort Saskatchewan refinery.

Once the decision was made to use this ammonia leach process, Western Mining engaged Bechtel Pacific to design a plant in association with Sherritt Gordon personnel. The site chosen was Kwinana on the shores of Cockburn Sound, south of Perth. Western Mining appointed people to work at Sherritt Gordon's plant for training purposes and some Sherritt Gordon people were assigned to work at the Kwinana refinery when it was first established.

The refinery, only the second such plant to be built using the Sherritt Gordon hydrometallurgical process, commenced production in May 1970 with a rated capacity of 15,000 tonnes per year of nickel metal products. By the end of 1975 the plant was expanded to produce 30,000 tonnes of refined nickel annually.

Western Mining is the fourth largest nickel producer in the western world.

Aluminium Products —

One of the world's largest producers of aluminium, the Canadian based firm of Alcan Aluminium Limited, is represented in Western Australia in the Perth suburb Osborne Park. As part of the Alcan Australia Limited organisation it services the State's domestic aluminium needs.

The Osborne Park centre supplies all the major users of aluminium semi-fabricated products such as architectural fabricators, boat builders, ceiling manufacturers, heat exchange manufacturers, solar heater companies as well as handymen.

Alcan has been represented in Western Australia since 1969 when a sales office was first opened.

In July 1975, Alcan relocated to Osborne Park, seven kilometres north west of Perth, commencing retail sales as well as the conventional industrial business.

In 1976, Alcan started its first Alcan mobile gutter factory, which provides on the spot customer service with continuous guttering needs.

Alcan, however, has been associated in the Australian aluminium industry for the past 40 years, pioneering the semi-fabricated industry.

It has established a domestic supply smelter at Kurri Kurri in N.S.W. with a current capacity of 90,000 tonnes per annum.



Alcan Aluminium Limited's Osborne Park aluminium centre.