

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **TRAINING SIMULATOR DRIVES SAFE SKILLS**

Darwin, 13 April 2007

A high-tech training tool has just arrived at MRM that will help improve the safety of heavy machinery operator training at Xstrata Zinc's McArthur River Mine in the Northern Territory.

MRM Community Relations Manager, Patrick Collins told a meeting of the Indigenous Mining Enterprise Taskforce in Darwin this week that MRM is the first mine in the Territory to acquire a Heavy Machinery Simulator which gives trainee operators the look and feel of operating heavy machinery while in a safe, simulated environment.

"This training tool has the potential to dramatically improve the performance of machinery operators, reduce operating and maintenance costs for the machinery and support our local employment strategies," Mr Collins said.

MRM's change to open pit mining places greater emphasis on the use of heavy machinery such as dozers, haul trucks and excavators and with this comes a need for a different set of skills.

Mr Collins said the mine's future training has to include a major focus on the development of highly competent machinery operators.

"The simulator gives us the ability to safely train beginners and reassess experienced operators in a wide range of realistic situations and scenarios, including emergency procedures," he said.

"For the operators, it is much safer to practice and learn from mistakes in a simulated environment than from the driver's seat of a multi-million dollar piece of equipment where the margin for error is small."

Mr Collins said the availability of the simulator on site is also important for attracting and retaining local recruits from the Borroloola region.

"We need to be able to provide local recruits with the expert training they need to develop meaningful careers in the mining industry," he said.

"By having all the facilities to offer this training locally we can improve their skills and also prevent segregation from their community."

The simulator is like a very big video game which can take trainees through different skill levels that need to be passed before moving on to training in the actual machinery.

It uses different consoles to simulate a range of machines and each console exactly replicates the controls and seating positions of the real machine. So far, MRM has purchased the consoles for five machines – the Caterpillar 777 and 785 Haul Truck, the Caterpillar D10 and D11 Dozer and the Hitachi 2500 Excavator.

Tailored training programs for each machine are now being developed including pictorial and survey data loaded into its programs to create a virtually real impression of MRM haul roads and open pit area of operation.

“The more realistic the simulation the more confident we can be that we are developing all operators to a high consistent level of skill to ensure good driving practice on site,” Mr Collins said.

The simulator will be to utilised to facilitate the initial stage of machine training. Participants will then be enrolled into a conventional metalliferous training program for commencement of the machine training phase in the mining environment.

Graduates of the Metalliferous Mining training programs will be certified with nationally accredited licences, which will in turn open doors to career opportunities across the Australian mining industry.

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### **Photographs**

The images of the simulator on page three are available by contacting Nicole Setchell on [nicole.setchell@rowland.com.au](mailto:nicole.setchell@rowland.com.au)

### **For more information**

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**Inside the simulator: an MRM trainee driving the new Heavy Machinery Simulator designed to improve driver skills and training safety**

