



Altan testing the boundaries in Nevada

Nearby corporate activity and the imminent start of drilling at its Venus copper project in the US has Australian explorer Altan Nevada Minerals Ltd bracing for a big finish to 2019.

TSX-listed Altan is set to kick off a new drilling programme to test whether mineralisation from the neighbouring Pumpkin Hollow development continues south into its Venus project.

It comes as prolific copper producer Huby Minerals Inc completes a \$US30 million takeover of Mason Resources, one of four key players alongside Altan in the copper-rich state of Nevada.

“That really puts the focus on the area as a great copper development arena and will make for a very interesting scenario should our Venus project deliver the results we expect and prove to potentially be another mine in the Yerington district,” Altan chief executive Paul Stephen told **Paydirt**.

Pending the award of the required permits, Altan is planning to start drilling at Venus before the end of the month. Contracts for water, earthworks and drilling were recently awarded after the company’s new vice-president exploration Barry Bourne physically sighted and pegged the proposed holes for the programme, as required by Nevada mining laws.

Bourne, formerly head geophysicist for Barrick Gold Corp based in Nevada, also recently met with Altan founder Kelly Cluer – now head of exploration, North America, at Kinross Gold Corp – to discuss the potential outside of the gazetted Venus project area.

“Some of the projects that we’ve inherited look to be very attractive and we will be beginning work programmes on those in parallel to drilling Venus,” Stephen said.

“It was a pretty productive trip from Barry’s perspective and it looks like we’ve got a couple of projects there that might be real surprise packages. And we will certainly be looking to ac-

quire more ground in and around the existing project that we have.”

Chaired by well-known mining identity John Jones and supported by directors Stephen and Bourne, Altan has also rec-



alibrated a previously disorganised database of project information into a new modernised system, something Stephen said would help the company with potential acquisitions.

Altan’s review of the historic geochemistry, geophysics and magnetics has

to prove up firstly that the anomaly that we’ve got is a copper mineralised sulphide,” Stephen said.

“Our neighbour Pumpkin Hollow is both open pits and underground. At the moment they are focused very strongly on completing the build of their mill and their underground which is less than a mile from our drill targets, so we are drilling in very, very close proximity to a near-complete mill and underground operation with four satellite open pits.

“We would hope to prove up something that was shallow and open-pittable, but we’re not going to know that until we drill it.”

Stephen, who spent more than a decade with Brazil-focused gold explorer Crusader Resources (now Big River Gold Ltd), said the promising future outlook for copper, coupled with Nevada’s low jurisdictional risk, should garner market attention for Altan should it deliver on the exploration front.

“Earlier in the year we attended a panel discussion hosted by the heads of some of the largest funds globally and they were asked the question of where they would look to invest their dollars in the minerals sector,” Stephen said.

“All of them unanimously said copper in safe jurisdictions, and when they mean safe jurisdictions, Nevada shows up really as No.1 on everyone’s books.

“A lot of the big copper mines are challenged by a lack of new discovery, a lack of new development, but what’s really put something of a pause on that has been the commodity price sliding with the trade wars between the US and China.

“I don’t think anybody sees that as being a long-term dynamic, so as that situation resolves itself and as a deficit of copper supply just continues to grow, at some point in time we’re going to see a resurgence of the commodity price.”

– Michael Washbourne



Altan Nevada directors Paul Stephen and Barry Bourne

suggested Venus shares multiple characteristics to Pumpkin Hollow which is imminently set to become the first new copper mine developed in the US in more than a decade.

“What we hope to achieve at Venus is