



Hunt for precious metal

By Craig Brealey

Drilling has resumed around Broken Hill in the search for a metal that is now worth more than gold.

Western Australian company, Impact Minerals, owns three prospects to the north and south of the city, two of which had returned very high grade results for palladium along with platinum, nickel and copper.

Mike Jones, the company's managing director, said it had now raised the capital to continue its exploration at Red Hill, off the Menindee road, and Platinum Springs not far from Round Hill.

"They've all been known about for a hundred years or more but there hasn't really been much work on most of those areas so we're going in with all guns - or at least drills - blazing," Dr Jones told the BDT.

Red Hill was first mined for copper and platinum in 1888 but platinum was a difficult metal to extract, he said.

The other prospect, Little Broken Hill, is south of Red Hill.

"One of the interesting things about the Broken Hill area is that it has some of the highest grades of platinum and palladium in Australia," said Dr Jones. "It is very unique."

Most of the prospects were not very big but they were very high grade, he said.

"They are two of the six metals in the palladium group of metals. The others are rare and even those occur in the Broken Hill area."

Dr Jones said platinum and palladium were used mainly in catalytic converters which reduce pollution from the exhaust of motor engines. Platinum is used in diesel engines and palladium in petrol.

Demand for diesel engines had fallen because the fuel was bad for the environment, and this meant greater demand for petrol.

"There is a higher shortage of palladium which, at US \$2000 an ounce, is now worth more than gold," Dr Jones said.

Platinum Springs, formerly known as Mulga Springs, is situated not far north of the Potosi silver mine.

"It's less than ten kilometres from Round Hill and was first drilled in the early 2000s but only a

couple of holes," said Dr Jones.

He said locals were being employed in the drilling program which was being led by a geologist from WA.

"We got a geologist out before the Western Australian border was closed and we've got a local group, Aussam, doing the logistics and providing the field hands."

Assay results should be returned next month, said Dr Jones.



Impact Mineral's drilling program got underway this week at its Little Broken Hill prospect, south of Red Hill.

PICTURE: Supplied