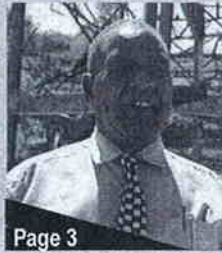




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DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES BECOMES A MINISTRY

More jobs for locals

By MOFFAT MAMU

ABOUT 400 job opportunities will be provided when Gold Ridge Mining Limited (GRML) starts full operations on Guadalcanal.

Australian Solomon Gold Limited (GRML's mother company) chief executive officer Ron Douglas stated this yesterday to the media.

Mr Douglas said an estimated 400 to 500 jobs will be created when GRML starts.

Currently the company is employing about 205 locals at the mine site as well as at its Ranadi head office.

However, Mr Douglas said this figure will be doubled when GRML starts full operations.

GRML country manager Val Beniuk said the jobs created would be for mining experts, chemists, drivers, mechanics, accountants, mining rescue operators, securities and others.

"We are looking at creating between 400 to 500 jobs for the local Solomon Islanders both skilled and unskilled," Mr Beniuk said.

However, he clarified that of these jobs 80 per cent would be for Gold Ridge landowners.

Only the 20 remaining per cent will be open to the public.

At for the operations at the mine site, Mr Beniuk said work is progressing well and on schedule.

Mr Beniuk said currently work is focused on land acquisition, the tailing dam, relocation of landowners and reconciliation between the company, landowners and the government.

"We want to ensure all outstanding issues are addressed properly before the company rolls into full operation," Mr Beniuk said.

Meanwhile, Mr Douglas said based on the current gold catch the company's operation has a lifespan of eight years but that might increase once more exploration is being done and more gold discovered.

He said the company is expected to produce its first gold bar at the final quarter of this year or early next year.

He said the delay is the setting up of power generating machine for the operation, which is expected to use biomass - the waste from oil palm.

Mr Douglas and Mr Beniuk have met with the prime minister to brief him on the progress of the mining operation in the country.



Visiting Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Solomons Gold Limited Ron Douglas, left, and Gold Ridge Mining Limited Country Manager Val Beniuk.

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