



Nickel miners step up activity in Kambalda

By Ngaire Ballard

NICKEL activity is continuing to build up around Kambalda.

Reliance Mining has started production at its Beta Hunt project, Pioneer Resources has closed off its bid to raise \$5.5 million and Mincor Resources has started its nickel mine decline at Redross, all ahead of schedule.

Reliance Mining, which is gearing up to mine the Beta Hunt nickel mine on Lake Lefroy, said yesterday remnant production had begun six weeks earlier than expected.

Initial ore is being mined from remnant stopes and the company expects access to the Beta nickel deposit will be established in the March quarter next year.

Pioneer Resources, the nickel sulphide spin-off from nickel laterite explorer Heron Resources, was heavily over-subscribed for its initial public offer and closed early due to demand. The funds will be used for exploration and evaluation of its seven projects in the Goldfields.

Pioneer managing director David Crook said the company was aiming to set up a new office in Kalgoorlie-Boulder early next year and employ about six people as geologists and ancillary staff, on top of consultants

as needed. He hoped to employ local people as a priority and said Pioneer was negotiating to take on a senior exploration team.

Mr Crook said drilling rigs were already booked for exploration at Acra, about 50km north-east of Kalgoorlie-Boulder and aerial surveys would be done over Spargoville, west of Kambalda, in December.

Mr Crook said nickel sulphide projects had the advantage of being developed quickly into mines.

"It could be as soon as two years that we're in production," Mr Crook said.

"Certainly it wasn't planned but we've stepped into a very good market."

Pioneer is due to list on the stock exchange next week.

Mincor Resources managing director David Moore said the company was two weeks ahead of schedule at its new Redross mine, about 85km south of Kambalda.

He said drilling and blasting began last week and he hoped the portal would be established next week.

Mr Moore said the company was also in the process of discovering potential ore bodies near its Miitel mine and released positive drilling results from its South Miitel project on Tuesday.