

Rio Tinto Minerals invests in the future at its Three Springs Operation in Western Australia

16 November 2010 – Rio Tinto Minerals – the world’s leading talc and borates producer – has just inaugurated a state-of-the-art beneficiation plant at its Three Spring Operation, home to the largest talc deposit in Western Australia.

Designed to replace the prior beneficiation plant which was in poor structural condition, the new facility crushes, screens and washes up to 200 metric tonnes an hour of primary ore, which is then sorted using a more sophisticated representative sampling system. Combined with improved grade control techniques in-pit, the new plant ensures an all-round improvement in product quality. An integrated flow-sheet reduces double handling, making the plant more efficient, reducing fine particle generation and enabling a 30 percent saving in power consumption.

The plant which cost about AS\$11 million has the capacity to produce up to 150,000 tonnes of high grade ore a year to very accurate product specifications and in compliance with best-in-class safety standards.

“As Rio Tinto Minerals’ principal deposit in the Asia Pacific region, Three Springs is crucial to our long-term global talc strategy,” says Ken McLaren, General Manager of Three Springs Operation. *“It will be central to growing our business in Asian markets.”*

Three Springs supplies a full range of high brightness, highly pure microcrystalline talc grades essentially for the paint, paper, rubber and technical ceramics markets.



Rio Tinto Minerals Three Springs Operations’ new talc beneficiation plant is a key investment supporting the company’s strategy to grow business in Asia

About Rio Tinto Minerals

Rio Tinto Minerals is the acknowledged world leader in developing industrial minerals—building blocks for life and for products that contribute to better living—and in developing solutions to build its customers’ businesses.

The organization encompasses 2,200 people working at 35 facilities on five continents to serve more than 2,500 direct customers worldwide. It supplies approximately 20 percent of global demand for talc under the *Luzenac* brand and approximately 40 percent of global demand for refined borates under the *Borax 20 Mule Team*[®] brand.

Talcs enhance performance in applications such as paper, paints, plastics, ceramics, personal care products, agriculture and pharmaceuticals.

About the Three Springs Operations

Three Springs Operations is an open-pit talc mine located about 330 kilometers north-east of Perth, Western Australia. Talc has been mined at the site since the late 1940s. Current output stands at around 70 000 tonnes/year; production is expected to ramp up to over 120 000 tonnes over the next five years. Forecasts show that production will increase. The operation employs 20 people.