

# Millennium now a thousand light-years from where it was

## SPINIFEX

■ Stuart McKinnon



As the name suggests, it has been a long road back from near collapse for Millennium Minerals.

But the Pilbara-focused gold miner now looks primed to join the ranks of mid-tier producers, having reached an annual run rate of 100,000oz in recent weeks, well ahead of its proposed schedule.

And recent high-grade drilling results at its main Golden Eagle deposit based on a fresh understanding of its geological structure has the company eyeing a significant resource

upgrade by Christmas, lifting reserves above the existing 304,700oz and expanding mine life beyond three years.

It all went pear-shaped for Millennium in late 2014 when recovery rates from the processing plant at its flagship Nullagine project plummeted, indicating dreaded refractory ore, which is naturally resistant to conventional carbon-in-leach recovery methods.

When the gold in sulphide ore encountered at depth at Golden Eagle could not be recovered economically, costs soared, margins evaporated and

the debt vultures circled.

Enter Peter Cash. The Pilbara-born, Queensland-raised computer science graduate, who had spent most of his career working

in corporate development, joined the company in June 2015 to see what could be salvaged after the miner entered administration.

But instead of a salvage operation, Mr Cash hatched an ambitious plan to save the distressed miner. Using tough negotiation

skills, Mr Cash recapitalised the company by securing buy-in from its creditors, contractors, shareholders, board and senior management. By early 2016, Millennium was debt free with \$8 million in the bank.

The new strategy was to walk away from Golden Eagle and small satellite oxide deposits to keep cashflow ticking over.

Mr Cash also set about consolidating the company's landholdings across an Archean sedimentary belt with gold mineralisation outcrops from surface and ramp-up exploration over its 280sqkm of ground, to boost reserves and mine life.

The company's Nullagine landholding sits in a narrow belt surrounded by iron ore mines and in one of the most inhospitable parts of the Pilbara, which Mr Cash said

explained why the area had never been subjected to a systematic exploration program.

The company this year went underground for the first time at its Bartons deposit after finding the high-grade gold at depth there was in fact free-milling ore. But the other challenge was to adapt the existing Nullagine plant to treat sulphide ores, given the higher grades on offer at depth at Golden Eagle.

Installing a flotation circuit was the obvious choice but Millennium chose a lower cost tail-scavenging solution.

The plan allows it to bring Golden Eagle back into calculations, boost production and further lower its costs.



**Peter Cash**