



There's no place like home to follow the yellowcake road

While the general theme at Paydirt's Uranium Conference was one of optimism in the industry's future, a number of presenters lamented the fact that there had been virtually no greenfields uranium discoveries in recent memory.

Though UraniumSA managing director Russell Bluck shared the general feeling of optimism – and agreed that most uranium exploration in Australia was brownfields based – he was happy to stand out from the crowd in at least one sense.

"Most of the uranium work in Australia is brownfields work. Well, we now have a completely new discovery in a completely new area," he said.

The discovery he was talking about was UraniumSA's Mullaquana project in the Kankana Beds of the Pirie Basin south of Port Augusta.

That the company made the discovery in South Australia is perhaps not surprising, given that it eschewed overseas or interstate opportunities.

"Uranium is an international commodity, but for UraniumSA our world is uranium in South Australia. We have a single commodity focus and we focus on a single geological province, the Gawler Craton and we work in a single regulatory regime. We are in South Australia, nowhere else."

While there is a long way between identifying mineralisation and producing uranium ore, Bluck said that UraniumSA's drilling programmes had produced enough results to

definitely categorise the Pirie Basin and its Kankana Beds as a new uranium district.

Drill holes in both the western and eastern mineralised zones of Mullaquana have returned intercepts of 0.098% and 0.054% uranium respectively and across the district UraniumSA has identified mineralisation of up to 785 ppm uranium equivalent.

Bluck said Mullaquana shared distinct characteristics and was at the same exploration stage as its north-eastern neighbour, the Curnamona Province, was when the Beverley uranium mine was discovered in 1969.

Though both CRA in the 1970s and the then BHP in the 1980s explored in the Pirie Basin, it wasn't until 2007 that a review of a BHP geologist's log clued Bluck in that the district was worth another look.

UraniumSA's first drill hole in December 2007 intersected a uranium mineralised redox front.

While Bluck was confident in defining the Pirie Basin as a new province and said that UraniumSA was on the road from explorer to developer, he admitted there was much work to be done.

He used a map highlighting drill holes in a 2km by 2km area of another advanced South Australian in-situ leach uranium project and Mullaquana to demonstrate just where UraniumSA stood on the development track.

"They have drilled 241 holes, we have a total of 17 holes so we have a long way to go, but what we do have is extremely good geological continuity."

"We can establish the regional trace of the mineralised redox front, which clearly extends to the north and south ... and there is a very high potential for repetition along the geologically and geophysically defined redox fronts."

Bluck said the company had sufficient technical and financial resources to continue its drilling programme at Mullaquana and would negotiate to obtain the financial and technical partnerships needed to develop the project.

"The boom has delivered the results because we are about to make the transition from explorer to developer. The challenge ahead for us is to move from having bags of sand to drums of product."

– Jason Alexander



Russell Bluck