

Over the last few weeks there have been several statements made in various media about gold mining. Some are misunderstandings, some are misinterpretations of data, and others assume that nothing has changed since the early years. **HERE ARE THE FACTS.**

**‘Gold mining inevitably degrades rivers and destroys water quality’**

Treated water from our Waihi mining operations has been discharged into the Ohinemuri River since operations began in 1987. The water must meet stringent discharge criteria set by Waikato Regional Council. The treated water is constantly monitored and the river is regularly tested by an independent company. Reports are available online. The council’s data shows that the main water quality issue both upstream and downstream from our discharge point is E.coli bacteria. This does not come from mining. The water we put into the river is clean.

**‘Tailings dams are a toxic legacy that lasts for ever’**

Our two tailings impoundments are carefully engineered structures made up of a series of zones, each constructed to precise engineering specifications for compaction, shear strength, rock geochemistry and structural integrity. They are not dams that have been constructed out of tailings such as the dam in Brazil that recently failed. Our tailings impoundments are constructed to the same standard required to hold a large body of water.

The water in our first tailings impoundment has been discharging into the Ohinemuri River since 2006, some five years after tailings were last deposited in it. We are allowed to do this because the water quality meets the requirements set by Waikato Regional Council. If you use water from the Ohinemuri River you are using water that has come from our mine.

**‘House prices have dropped in Waihi East since underground mining began at Correnso’**

Sales data shows Waihi East prices have returned to market levels following a drop after the project announcement. A number of strategies such as Top Up supported price levels until the market returned to normal. Houses are selling in Waihi East at market rates.

**‘Gold mining is boom and bust’**

We have been operating in Waihi since 1987 and intend to stay here for the long term. Statistics New Zealand states that mining has a ‘relatively high survival rate’ in terms of business longevity; higher than health care, social services, agriculture, fisheries or telecommunications. They also note that only 29% of businesses that were started in 2001 were still operating 20 years later. We are still operating 29 years after we first started. Put another way, there has been mining here since 1878 with only a thirty year break in the middle of last century.

**‘Gold mining doesn’t provide jobs, and those it has don’t go to locals’**

We currently employ around 300 staff and contractors. Over 70% live in the Waihi and Waihi Beach area with the remainder generally within a 30 minute drive. Many of them have been with us for years. They do their grocery shopping here, send their children to local schools and are members of local groups, clubs and organisations. We have staff who have been working here in the industry since before the mine started in 1987. Almost all of our staff are Kiwis.

**‘Exploration drill rigs mean mining will follow’**

Exploration permits are generally granted with conditions and obligations for five years. An exploration permit allows an operator to conduct a detailed investigation by drilling. Exploration drilling does not mean mining will follow. Over 300,000 metres of exploration drilling has been completed in the last 30 years, enough to stretch from Waihi to Coromandel Town three times. The only new discoveries made have been Favona and Correnso. There is a about a one in one thousand likelihood that a drill site will become a mine.

**‘The Martha open pit will never become a lake. It is an engineering impossibility’**

Once all mining is completed and we turn off the pumps the open pit will fill with water. It is an engineering impossibility for it not to fill. We have a consent to draw water from the Ohinemuri River during high river flows to speed up the process.

Water from our first tailings impoundment has been discharged into the Ohinemuri River since 2006.

**‘Waihi has a high deprivation index score, so that shows that mining does not contribute to the local economy’**

The Deprivation Index was developed by health researchers for use in the provision of health services. It measures such factors as how many people are in each bedroom of your house, whether you own a phone or a car, and what qualifications you have. The Deprivation Index is not a measure of economic performance. The interwoven factors which contribute to the final score are mostly outside the influence of employers. Several areas of Whangamata and Thames have similar scores to parts of Waihi. Is there an industry we can ‘blame’ in those towns? Employment is only one factor in a programme that was designed to provide targeted health initiatives but which has been widely misunderstood as an economic indicator.

