

Leadership profile: Errol Smart - Orion Minerals

Guest Contributor



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Orion Minerals leader Errol Smart has taken the Northern Cape-based Prieska copper-zinc project from an abandoned shaft to a bankable, fully permitted project in just five years

In August 2020, Orion Minerals announced that its flagship Prieska copper-zinc project was fully permitted following the granting of a final mining right by South Africa’s Department of Mineral Resources and Energy.

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The poster child for junior mining, Orion Minerals was able to locate, acquire, drill out, complete a high-quality Bankable Feasibility Study and fully permit a world-class modern mine, to international best practice standards, in just five years.

“Errol’s contribution to South African mining is impressive. He has done well to build confidence in the project and change perceptions of junior mining and starting new mines in the country.” – Andrew van Zyl

This required a massive push from the company’s leader Errol Smart, who guided his team with determination and inspiration from the start.

The small core management team, made up of a handful of individuals, has achieved what few companies double their size have

achieved in double the time – they fast-tracked a project from acquisition to shovel-ready in a country where junior mining is not for the fainthearted.

What Errol and his team have done is demonstrate the potential of junior mining and exploration, and the significant financial benefits that it can mobilise, when working with a supportive host community, strong BEE partners and proactive local and provincial government.

The project is one of the few advanced, fully permitted base metal projects worldwide. It has already seen over R450 million (A\$36 million) in foreign direct investment to reach this stage and is now poised to bring in a further investment of over R5.4 billion (A\$432 million) over the next three years as Errol and his team construct a mine projected to deliver more than R40 billion (A\$3.2 billion) of mineral exports over an initial 12-year life.

Ready to begin construction as of end 2020, Prieska is poised to play a major role in the post-COVID economic recovery of South Africa and is well positioned to supply high-quality copper and zinc concentrates to the global market.

Errol Smart is also an avid ambassador of building a business that supports the global ESG (environmental, social and governance) principles.

While the concept of ESG is not new, few mining heads and influencers have taken to embracing it as well as Errol has and this is reflected throughout the Orion Minerals team.

This drive could not have been highlighted more than when the company was awarded (in late 2020) the Emerging ESG Leader Award at the 2020 AAMEG Africa Awards (AAMEG – The Australia-Africa Minerals & Energy Group) in recognition of its innovative and pioneering ESG work at Prieska.

The Emerging ESG Leader Award recognises companies that have a visionary approach to ESG which delivers long-term benefits for communities.

The Emerging ESG Leader Award acknowledges Orion’s exemplary work as a junior mining company in developing innovative ESG strategies, forging meaningful relationships with its host communities and, importantly, making a significant contribution to the socio-economic development of South Africa’s Northern Cape Province.

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