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NEWS RELEASE

Trust forges new path in Australia's environmental landscape

(PERTH) – The Great Victoria Desert Biodiversity Trust, a model unique to the Western Australian mining and environmental landscape, was unveiled by AngloGold Ashanti Australia Ltd (AGAA) in front of around 70 guests at an official launch in Kings Park last week.

Six years in the making, the Trust forms the centrepiece of the Tropicana Joint Venture's (AGAA 70% and manager, Independence Group NL 30%) biodiversity offsets strategy for the new Tropicana Gold Mine, which is located 330 kilometres east-northeast of Kalgoorlie, on the western edge of the Great Victoria Desert.

The Trust is a condition of the Federal EPBC Act approval for the mine, and reflects the joint venture partners' recognition of the need to base environmental management decisions on robust science. It was officially launched by Dr Paul Vogel, Chairman of the WA Environmental Protection Authority, who endorsed the model.

"Restoration of ecosystem function for mines in the arid regions of WA remains an elusive and possibly unrealistic goal, and significant residual impacts from mining can still remain," Dr Vogel said.

"We need to think and act differently if we are to achieve a net environmental benefit from mining.

"Like the initial EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) of the Tropicana proposal, which the EPA publicly praised for its high quality data and positive engagement, so too is the Tropicana JV to be commended for establishing this Trust.

"Implementation of the model will be watched with great interest by industry and government alike and we wish it every success in delivering enduring benefits for the region."

At the launch, AGAA Senior Vice President Mike Erickson formally handed the Trust over to its independent Chairman, Dr Garry Middle.

Dr Middle, a former Associate Professor and Course Coordinator of the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at Curtin University, said he was very much looking forward to the work the Trust was about to embark on.

"The Trust wants to conserve and, where appropriate, enhance the ecological and cultural and social values of the Great Victoria Desert."

Involving collaboration between industry and conservation regulators, funds from the Trust will directly contribute to conservation activity and knowledge gathering in this remote part of WA.

The Trust will also work with traditional owners, government and NGOs to improve employment outcomes and to utilise traditional ecological knowledge to increase biodiversity knowledge.

Initial funding of A\$1.6 million has been provided by the TJV, but over Tropicana's current 10-year mine life this will reach around A\$4.4 million with contributions comprising an annual fee and \$/hectare for the cleared footprint.

An independent trustee will be accountable for the Trust's financial management and it is being administered by an independent Management Panel, comprising representatives from the Department of Parks and Wildlife and AGAA on behalf of the Tropicana JV.

Technical Advisory Panels will guide scientific decisions and provide third party reviews and input into the research and on-ground conservation work.

The day-to-day activities of the Trust are being managed by GVD Biodiversity Trust Coordinator Kathryn Sinclair.

The Trust will make all research findings publicly available.

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