



Acting Minister for Lands & Mineral Resources Maciu Nalumisa with Lion One Pte Limited chief executive officer and chairman Walter Berukoff during the first gold pour at Tuvatu Alkaline Gold mine on October 10, 2023. Photo: Waisea Nasokia

## Hickey hailed for leadership

**WASEA NASOKIA**  
NADI

**L**ion One's Tuvatu Alkaline Gold Mine has not only transformed the landscape, it has paved the way for a brighter future for the people of Fiji.

Lion One Pte Limited chief executive and chairman Walter Berukoff shared the sentiments during the first gold pour at its flagship project in Sabeto, yesterday.

He said the first pour marked a momentous occasion amid the culmination of 18 years of dedication, perseverance, and collaboration.

"We stand on the precipice of history at the first gold pour of the Tuvatu Gold Mine, a project that has not only transformed the landscape, it has paved the way for a brighter future for the people of Fiji," Mr Berukoff said.

He acknowledged Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka, the Mineral Resources Department, and Government.

"Your commitment to fostering economic growth and sustainable development has laid the foundation for a thriving mining industry that benefits both our nation and its people," Mr Berukoff said.

He acknowledged the invaluable contribution of international partners, including Quinton Hennigh, whose expertise and collaboration was instrumental in overcoming the myriad of challenges that accompanied such a monumental undertaking.

"Together, we have proven that when nations unite in a common purpose, extraordinary feats can be accomplished," he said.

"As we witness the first gold pour, let it be a symbol not only of economic prosperity, but also of the potential that lies within each of us to create positive change.

"The Tuvatu mine stands as a beacon of hope, illustrating what can be achieved when diverse talents converge for a shared vision."

He thanked individuals who toiled tirelessly at the Tuvatu Gold Mine under the leadership of chief operating officer, Patrick Hickey whose passion and determination turned a dream into reality.

"This achievement is a testament to the strength of our collective efforts and the resilience of the Fijian spirit," Mr Berukoff said.

Mr Hickey said the mine had a fully operational team.

"With this first gold pour event today, we will move from construction to operations," he said.

"We intend to undertake our relationships with local landowners and communities. We are able to demonstrate to investors that this was a serious property and the international investors put a significant amount of money up to allow this mine to be built."

Lion One has a gold lab that operates 24-7 at production levels that are four times its previous rate.

"This gold lab by the way will be fully internationally accredited next month and is becoming the envy of the South Pacific."

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## GOLD

# Future Looks Good for Tuvatu: Nalumisa

**WASEA NASOKIA**  
NADI

**L**andowners joined staff of Lion One Limited yesterday in an elaborate traditional celebration that marked the first-ever gold pour at the Tuvatu Alkaline Gold Mine in Nadi.

More than 1000 guests brought the roof down with cheer, whistles, and applause as they watched the first gold pour - a first for many.

Acting Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources Maciu Nalumisa hailed the occasion as a milestone and said it augured well with the future for Lion One Metals Ltd at Tuvatu.

"The future looks good for Tuvatu," Mr Nalumisa said.

"The best is yet to come," Mr Nalumisa said.

He said Lion One's decision to take over and further mineral resources development at Tuvatu was a sign of investor confidence.

"That decision puts Fiji on the radar of the mining world, providing an attractive place to invest and do business," Mr Nalumisa said.

"I'm confident that Tuvatu will become the benchmark for mining operations in Fiji.

Mr Nalumisa affirmed the government's position to create an investor-friendly climate for the mineral resources sector, to attract proven mineral explorers and miners.

The Government encouraged a tripartite partnership between the State as owner of minerals, landowners as owners of land, and in-

vestors such as Lion One.

"This also ensures that whilst the company and its shareholders receive its returns which justify the investment of such magnitude in the first place, the Government ensures the people of Fiji, including landowners, derive maximum benefit from such projects especially when a non-renewable resource is being extracted," Mr Nalumisa said.

### Jobs

Lion One has more than 400 employees, which indirectly scale up to 2400 jobs.

"This is a big boost to a small island developing state's economy such as ours," Mr Nalumisa said.

He called for more diversification for a resilient economy, especially post-pandemic.

Tuvatu Gold Mine will boost the mineral resources sector's contribution to Fiji's gross domestic product (GDP), a position Lion One has maintained since its lease extension last year.

"This new mine will help us retain many of our qualified local technical experts in Fiji," Mr Nalumisa said.

Nadi could eventually complement Vatukoula as the hub of the gold mining industry in Fiji, he said.

### Macro Level

Lion One's new mine is the single largest packaged investment in Fiji in the past four years, valued at over \$200 million.

It will inject \$25 million in the government's coffers in the next

five years through royalties, to top the \$20 million already paid in taxes.

"The multiplier effect of this industry is endless," Mr Nalumisa said.

"The exporting of gold means more foreign currency injected into our economy, which improves our foreign reserves with the Reserve Bank of Fiji."

Mr Nalumisa acknowledged the land-owning unit, *yavusa* Rarawaqa, and the *mataqali*.

Nabouwalu, for giving their resources for the benefit of future generations.

"Your collaborations has resulted in \$200 million already invested into the Fiji economy," he said.

"This level of investment is a testament to the capital-intensive nature of mineral exploration, mine development, and mining.

"It has seen an increase in the benefits to land-owning unit, through payment of fees and royalties.

"A high percentage of the workforce is from the local community and I hear it has attracted miners from Vatukoula too.

"There is job security for employees with longer employment opportunities."

### Commitment

Lion One has proven its commitment to Fiji with the level of investment made to develop a modern narrow-vein gold mine in the country.

This comes with a strong focus on:

- Safety and the environment,

- ensuring a small mining footprint,
- A tailings storage facility built to Australian and Canadian standards,
- A solar plant that reduces emissions on mining development,
- processing plant,
- New core shed and drilling yard,
- First-class facilities in the mine change room,
- High-speed internet and world-class laboratory.

He was impressed with Lion One's investment in its solar plant as this would reduce its carbon footprint and greenhouse gas emissions.

"Fiji's mining sector has a role to play in fighting climate change."

### Minister pleads

Mr Nalumisa pleaded with Lion One Metals who have been part of the Fiji family since 2008 and have been given keys to one of Fiji's valuable resources.

"Treat it with much care. Dig as you would in your own back yard ensuring that all proper procedures and protocols are always maintained from mining to the disposal of waste material," he said.

"Even with an approved Impact Assessment a great responsibility remains on the company to ensure minimal damage to the environment and the implementation of proven best rehabilitation strategies where such work may be required."

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