

31 January 2014

Rio Tinto Alcan Chief Executive visits Bell Bay smelter

Jacynthe Côté, chief executive, Rio Tinto Alcan arrived in Northern Tasmania this week for a hectic two-day visit that included a tour of Bell Bay Aluminium's smelter operations at George Town.

Ms Côté and Rio Tinto Alcan's senior management team from Canada spent a full day at Bell Bay Aluminium on Wednesday 29 January, meeting with Bell Bay Aluminium management as well as taking time to meet and talk to employees in operational areas of the smelter.

Bell Bay Aluminium has faced challenging market conditions since 2011 due to continuing low aluminium prices, high exchange rate and higher costs of production.

As Ms Cote explained, "The aluminium market will remain tough for some time but Bell Bay Aluminium has been recognised within Rio Tinto Alcan for its business transformation over the last two years with the implementation of a number of significant performance and business improvements. On this visit, I wanted to recognise the dedication and perseverance of the team at Bell Bay during what have been and continue to be very difficult times in the aluminium industry in Australia."

"While there is still more work to be done and the Bell Bay team is committed to implementing that work, it's important to remember that any performance and business improvements at the smelter must focus on the long term sustainability of the operation." said Ms Cote.

"The world's most competitive economies rely on a strong manufacturing sector that fosters employment growth, provides competitive wages and positively influences the trade balance of an economy. In the case of the aluminium industry the competitive price of delivered energy is one of the key requirements to sustain any operation. In Tasmania access to a reliable delivered energy supply at an affordable and competitive cost is essential to Bell Bay Aluminium's continued contribution to Tasmania's economic development over the long term."

Bell Bay Aluminium's General Manager, Ray Mostogl added "Bell Bay Aluminium is extremely proud to showcase the performance and business improvements of our operation during this site visit. Tasmania relies on all aspects of its economy functioning well and as we continue to strive to be sustainable, Bell Bay Aluminium has a key role to play in ensuring the economic wheel keeps turning and generating wealth for our state."

Background information:

Bell Bay Aluminium is located on the Tamar River near George Town in Northern Tasmania.

Bell Bay Aluminium directly and indirectly employs more than a thousand Tasmanians and contributes \$690M per annum to Tasmania's Gross State Product.

Annual production in 2013: 189,423 tonnes

Bell Bay was the first aluminium smelter built in the Southern Hemisphere, commencing production in 1955 as a joint venture between the Commonwealth and Tasmanian Governments.

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