

You've probably never seen a mine like this before



There are greenfields mining developments and there are “green fields” projects – and then there is the Tampia Gold Mine, which is one of the few in Western Australia that can lay claim to being both.

Location is everything in that equation. Tampia, operated by WA gold producer Ramelius Resources, is situated at Narembeen, in the heart of the Wheatbelt.

It is surrounded by farmland and even has working fields within its project boundaries. Before the mine went into operation in 2021, the grand sum of Naremebeen’s mining history involved an undeveloped deposit discovered in 1987 by BHP Minerals, then drilled by an exploration company – Explaurum Limited – that was subsequently taken over by Ramelius.

“It is pretty unusual I suppose,” mine manager Hugh Trivett said, reflecting on Tampia’s geographic context.

“There are plenty of mines in the South West that have greenery around them, however, not many are situated right in the middle of active farms.

“Day to day, the team at Tampia might drive past the CBH grain bins, road trains hauling grain, and see not just large mining equipment but also large farming equipment like headers and harvesters.

“There are also 1000 hectares on the mining lease that are being farmed for canola, wheat and barley.”



Crops being grown with the Tampia Gold Mine in the background.

Harvest time means farming machinery moving in relatively close proximity to mining areas, so there is a need for the Tampia team to stay vigilant to ensure correct separation protocols are adhered to.

But Trivett said on-site farming had been a great success, reflective of the wider positive interaction between the mining workforce and the local community.

The mining operation has a service contract in place with the local vehicle maintenance garage, sources many day-to-day essentials from a Naremben hardware store, has tyres supplied and installed locally and makes use of the town's IGA wherever possible.

"It has been a really amazing experience to operate in a small farming community like Naremben," he said.

"It's always good to look around at the local pub or sporting events to see how well the mining team has assimilated into the community. Our employees have access to all the local facilities, so no doubt they have been able to add to the commercial viability of some of those businesses.

"We lease the farmland [on the mining lease] to a local co-op called Go Naremben, which is made up of volunteers from the community.

"Go Naremben uses the farm to generate funds for all the local sporting clubs, which is a real win-win situation."



Narembeen’s location – close to 286km due east of Perth – and green surroundings for part of the year have been a distinct selling point for workers looking for a change from remote operations.

The workforce buses in and out of a camp on the outskirts of the Narembeen township, with many operators and workshop personnel on two-weeks-on, two-weeks off swings, and most office workers and professional staff going eight days on and six days off.

The camp includes a satellite shop that is an extension of the Narembeen IGA.

“It’s definitely a refreshing change from the likes of the Pilbara or Goldfields which can feel like working on the surface of Mars!” Trivett said.

“Being drive-in, drive-out and so close to Perth – three hours’ drive – has definitely been an advantage as it provides workers with flexibility that most FIFO sites cannot.

“It’s just easier to leave site for annual leave, sick days or personal reasons as opposed to having to charter flights.

“Originally I actually moved to Narembeen and absolutely loved the lifestyle but unfortunately due to family commitments, including having grandkids, my wife and I have now moved back Perth.

“So I am part of that drive-in, drive-out scenario as well.”



The Tampia mine site up close.

While describing Tampia as a “pretty standard” open pit mine in terms of its operational profile, Trivett said it had been a unique and rewarding experience incorporating mining into a community that had historically been based around cereal cropping and cattle and sheep production.

Ore is carted from Tampia to another Ramelius site in the Wheatbelt, Edna May, for processing.

“Other than the need for several rather large water storage dams to ensure mine water is kept separate to rain or run-off water, Tampia is an open pit gold operation similar to many other mines,” Trivett said.

“We now realise why the Wheatbelt is where it is – it rains a lot compared to other operations in the Murchison or the Goldfields!

“I think the most exciting aspect of the Tampia Gold Mine has been for a mining company to be able to enter into a predominantly farming environment and get on with business, while having a positive impact on both the community and businesses in and around Narembeen.”