

## Blackstone Successfully Completes Major Milestone at Ta Khoa

Blackstone Minerals Limited ("Blackstone" or the "Company") is pleased to provide a project update concerning its integrated Ta Khoa mine to battery precursor project in Vietnam (the "Project"). The Company has achieved a major milestone following the completion of a comprehensive 12-month piloting programme.

Blackstone's piloting programme at ALS Metallurgy ("ALS") in Western Australia was completed on 16 December 2022. Piloting is a critical milestone to validate and underpin ongoing Definitive Feasibility Studies ("DFS"). With the support of ALS, and process engineering partner Wood, a 12-month programme of work was undertaken that developed a scaled version of Blackstone's concentrate to sulphate flowsheet. Highlights:

- **Operations:** >15,000 labour hours without injury
- **Feed:** >7 tonnes (comprised of Ban Phuc and third-party tonnes from Trafigura)
- **POX piloting:** >700 hours of operation
- **SX piloting:** >1,100 hours of operation
- **MHP:** >2.2 tonnes produced and leached
- **Product quality:**
  1. **Nickel sulphate:** achieved battery grade specification
  2. **Cobalt sulphate:** achieved battery grade specification
  3. **Copper cathode:** achieved 4N specification
- **Stakeholders:** five visits from potential partners and other stakeholders

Technical outcomes have met and / or exceeded assumptions within Blackstone's Pre-Feasibility Studies. These data points will be incorporated into the DFS. In support of partnership efforts, nickel and cobalt sulphates have been provided to potential partners.

The success of the piloting programme is a product of Blackstone's investment in R&D; utilising internal and external resources. Internally, Blackstone's owners' team brings over 50 years' experience in leadership roles at major nickel mines and refineries globally. This experience has been complemented by Blackstone's engineering partner, Wood, and partnerships with Future Battery Industries CRC, Curtin University and the Electric Mining Consortium.

A key R&D objective is to develop and validate a flowsheet that can produce precursor for the electric vehicle market with industry leading ESG credentials. Independent assessments from Digbee, Minviro and Circulor have provided this assurance including an assessment -

audited by the Nickel Institute – that confirmed the Project will be the lowest emitting flowsheet in its industry at 9.8kg of CO<sub>2</sub> per kilogram of precursor (with opportunities to reduce further). Other ESG priorities are progressing to deliver on Blackstone's Green Nickel™ ambitions.

An application for a \$3.7 million research and development ("R&D") rebate has been completed for submission to the Australian Tax Office in recognition of flowsheet technology developed in FY2021/2022. Blackstone will update the market upon receipt of the R&D rebate. A forecast cash position of \$18 million is estimated for 31 December 2022 (excluding cash from controlled entities, listed investments valued at \$16.5M & the R&D rebate) with an estimated cash burn rate of \$2M per month in 2023.

Execution of the Project will be optimised with partners that complement Blackstone's development strategy. In support of this, five groups visited the Project site in 2022 as part of the strategic partnerships process. These visits were accompanied by meetings with government representatives (provincial and federal), Austrade, financial institutions and other important stakeholders. Visits to Vietnam have been complemented by partnership meetings in Australia, South Korea and Europe.

Scott Williamson, Blackstone's Managing Director:

*"The completion of our pilot plant programme with the world-class ALS facility and team is a significant milestone for Blackstone. The programme was completed safely and on schedule. Importantly, the results validate and support key assumptions underpinning our definitive feasibility study. Outputs of the pilot plant have confirmed that our project's flowsheet will be one of the lowest cost and lowest emissions globally; and an essential source of precursor supply for the accelerating electric vehicle market. Results of piloting are being incorporated into partnership discussions that will inform DFS outcomes."*

Authorised by the Managing Director on behalf of the Board.

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