

SE Business
HD **Gardner piles into nickel**
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Veteran prospector Robert Gardner has emerged as the buyer of Norilsk Nickel's mothballed Cawse and Avalon nickel laterite projects, through his Wingstar Investments vehicle.

Mr Gardner came to fame in the early 1990s as one of the finders of the 520-ounce Evening Star **gold** nugget. He became the kingmaker in Goldfield's consolidation play in the WA **gold** sector in 2000 as a 38 per cent shareholder in Gilt-Edged **Mining**.

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In 2012 he walked away with a slab of the proceeds of Dragon Mountain **Mining**'s \$125 **million sale** of its **Chinese** assets, after a capital return to shareholders.

Mr Gardner yesterday confirmed he was the buyer of the mines, mothballed by the Russian nickel giant at the height of the global financial crisis.

The **acquisition** price was not disclosed and Mr Gardner would not comment, saying both parties were constrained by confidentiality clauses until the close of the deal later this year.

Mr Gardner, who is also the chairman of ASX-listed explorer Nickelore, which holds substantial ground next door to Cawse in its Canegrass project, was coy over plans for the asset, saying no decisions would be made until the Norilsk deal closed. He conceded laterite nickel mines had a poor history in WA.

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