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HD **Rinehart protege flies coop for PNG start-up**
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Mining Hancock **coal** boss Paul Mulder is off to try his luck at a new **iron** sands, **coal**, and **copper-gold** play in PNG.

It was a long-dormant entrepreneurial streak that led Gina Rinehart protege Paul Mulder to leave the helm of the **mining** magnate's **coal** and infrastructure businesses to **lead** a resources start-up in Papua New Guinea.

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A consortium of Asian investors agreed to back the privately owned **iron** sands, **coal** and **copper-gold** play Mayur Resources on the condition that Mr Mulder be installed as chief, banking industry sources say.

Mr Mulder, 38, was made managing director last week. Since taking the helm, he has been in Asia to drum up more interest in Mayur.

"People know smart money follows the fund manager not the fund," he says. When asked about the risk of operating in PNG, Mr Mulder said local authorities had been "accommodating of the business so far" and "the media plays up stories of violence and political instability".

"This lazy and confused journalism ultimately leaves more opportunity for those entrepreneurial groups that can see through this," he said.

Mayur is fully funded, but Mr Mulder is trying to broaden the share registry to include prospective customers and traders.

He is spruiking Mayur as a low-cost producer, with the potential to create a new **mining** "province" in PNG: "The question I'm asking is: Where else do you see an asset on the coast, near **China**, that needs no infrastructure, with **iron ore** at 58 to 61 [per cent grade] and **coal** that is literally sticking out of the ground?"

In a dig at start-ups that ramp production early on, Mr Mulder said he planned to start production slowly, and was targeting an annual rate of one **million** tonnes of **iron** sands product in 2016.

Mr Mulder was group managing director of Ms Rinehart's private vehicle Hancock Prospecting, and spent almost seven years with the **firm**. Before that he was at BHP Billiton for 14 years.

He said Ms Rinehart was "years ahead of the curve" and her leadership style was "direct, nimble and adaptable".

"Gina keeps it lean and that provides a flat, clearer level of accountability."

She had earned her success, contrary to the labelling of her as an "**iron ore** heiress".

"You don't generate that type of wealth and success by accident, particularly when originally the odds were against you.

"Having seen things from the inside I know Gina amassed the real Hancock fortune after her father's passing."

Mr Mulder says working as an executive for Ms Rinehart saw him "gain skills very few asset presidents or CEOs in a blue chip resources house would even get."

He has spent the past two years running the \$15 billion Alpha and Kevin's Corner coal, rail and port projects in the Galilee Basin, after Ms Rinehart sold a majority project stake to Indian's GVK. He stayed on until the bulk project approvals were won.

"I've always had an entrepreneurial side but its been about waiting for the right time [to leave]," he said.

Mayur, a diversified iron sands, zircon coal and copper-gold play – has one of the largest tenement holdings in PNG, stretching 30,000 square metres and abutting the coast.

Mr Mulder is pitching Mayur as a play to establish two new bulk commodity industries in PNG – coal and iron ore sands and zircon. The group's copper and gold exploration rights include one "right next door" to Lihir Island, home to Newcrest's largest gold asset.

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