

Kalgoorlie Miner

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HD Focus pays native title claim
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Chinese-controlled **gold** miner Focus Minerals has paid \$600,000 to settle a native title claim for its mothballed Laverton **operations**.

The Wongatha people had been seeking as much as \$1.3 **million** in royalty payments dating back to 2007 when the Laverton **operations** fell under the control of Crescent **Gold**.

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Crescent, which Focus acquired for \$60 **million** in 2011, signed a land access agreement with the Wongatha people in March 2005.

Focus said it received a letter in March this year from the NEIB Aboriginal Corporation, acting for the Wongatha people, and the parties settled the matter last month.

NEIB, which stands for North East Independent Body, has also been in discussions with rare earths miner Lynas over tenements at its Mt Weld mine near Laverton.

The Focus claim was revealed in the **company**'s half-year report, which shows it booked impairments of \$6.12 **million** for its Coolgardie **operations** in the six months to June 30.

Coolgardie and Laverton were closed last year amid sky-high operating costs and the **gold** price crash as Focus haemorrhaged money.

China's Shandong **Gold**, which completed a \$225 **million** share placement in 2012 to secure a **stake** worth 49.5 per cent, watched the value of its investment collapse, with Focus' cash position at the end of the June quarter standing at \$92.2 **million**.

The half-year report also reveals Focus sold The Mount underground mine to contractor Lukah **Mining** for \$750,000.

The deal was brokered last month and announced to the market on September 9 for an undisclosed sum.

Chairman Jisheng Lu, who is based in Jinan in **China**'s Shandong province, reveals in Focus' half-year report there were "a number of offers" for The Mount and "several rounds of negotiations" with potential buyers.

The Mount, near Widgiemooltha, was deemed a "non-core" asset by Focus because it was 70km from the **company**'s mothballed Three Mile Hill processing plant at Coolgardie.

Focus has also sold its 200-person camp on the edge of the Laverton town site to Rakkan for \$900,000.

The camp has been on care and maintenance since the Laverton **operations** were shuttered last year.

Focus resumed drilling at Coolgardie and Laverton in March, spending \$2.6 million on exploration in the June quarter.

The main push was at the Brilliant deposit at Coolgardie, where the company sees strong potential for an underground mine, although a restart still appears a long way off.

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