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BHP BILLITON ANNOUNCES CLOSURE OF PERING LEAD ZINC MINE, STH AFRICA

BHP Billiton Base Metals today announced that the Pering Mine in South Africa will cease operations at the end of 2002. The mine was originally expected to close in early 2004, however, recent market conditions have necessitated that this be accelerated.

Brad Mills, President, BHP Billiton Base Metals commented, "The Pering Mine has been in operation for 16 years but the ore reserve is now nearly depleted. Pering will continue to operate at maximum plant capacity until the economically mineable reserve is depleted, which it is estimated will be by December 2002. Thereafter full scale closure and reclamation activities will commence."

Over the life of the mine, Pering produced approximately 39 000 tonnes of zinc concentrate and 6 000 tonnes of lead concentrate per annum.

The social and environmental impact of the mine's closure has been and will continue to be a focal point of the closure plan. Together with the trade unions, a significant effort is being placed on the development of a social plan aimed at reducing the economic impact on Pering's 193 employees. The social plan focuses on non-mining related job creation projects to assist in the sustainability of the Reivilo town and the local community.

Further news and information can be found on our Internet site: www.bhpbilliton.com

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