



A hole lot of gold

By Jade Macmillan

Updated Fri Feb 19, 2010 1:21pm AEDT

A casino, a race track or a giant inland lake?

Kalgoorlie-Boulder residents have had their say on what to do with the Super Pit when gold mining ceases at the site.

With an expected expiry date of 2021, some locals are worried about the impact the eventual withdrawal of Kalgoorlie's biggest employer could have on the Goldfields city.

The pit's managers, Kalgoorlie Consolidated Gold Mines, have surveyed more than 400 residents about their concerns and ideas, with interesting results.

Symbol

At more than 600 metres deep and nearly four kilometres long, the Super Pit is visible from space and stands as a giant symbol of the industry the Goldfields was built on.

It was developed in the 1980s when Perth businessman Alan Bond bought up individual leases along the so-called Golden Mile, discovered by Irish prospector Paddy Hannan nearly a century before.

Recent estimates have predicted the pit could have just over 10 years of life left and KCGM says it is important community consultation is undertaken now.

Ideas from the survey about what to do with the hole that will be left behind are as varied as they are creative, with nearly 70 per cent of respondents suggesting it be filled with water to create a giant, inland lake.

One resident had a more unique idea.

"An inland casino development could see it turn into the Australian Las Vegas. While this sounds far fetched and strange, it does have potential in real terms."

Or there was this suggestion.

"Build a luxury resort on the site with great views of the internal pit. Put in entertainment and sporting amenities and a water sports complex," it reads.

"I'd love to sit on the deck overlooking the water and have a meal and a beer and watch the sun go down."

Prospects

When the pit does close, what will happen to Kalgoorlie-Boulder?

The president of the city's Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Ron Mosby, doubts 2021 will see the operation shut down for good.

"There certainly is gold underneath the Super Pit and I think what we'd see is a reduction in the scale of the operation, a decline through a portal at the bottom of the existing pit," he said.

The Mayor, Ron Yuryevich, says while the mine as it is will not last forever, there is still potential for new operations in the area.

Slideshow: Photo 1 of 2



The Super pit in Kalgoorlie is the city's largest employer.

• [Map: Kalgoorlie 6430](#)

"The Golden Mile has been very prospective for the last 118 years and I expect it to reveal more treasures before it's finished," he said.

Many residents are concerned about the effect of the pit's closure on the local housing market.

The chairman of the Goldfields-Esperance branch of the Real Estate Institute of WA, Allan Pendall, is hoping it is a managed transition.

"If they announced today they were closing down in 12 months it would have quite a significant impact on us but a planned closure, if it's handled properly, I think Kalgoorlie-Boulder will be able to handle it."

Mr Pendall says the blow will be softened by the decreasing reliance on KCGM as the City's major employer.

"Kalgoorlie-Boulder, over the past 10 years or so, has become a much more mature city. Sure, KCGM is a very important part of Kalgoorlie as an employer and a community citizen but I think as time goes on there's less reliance."

Ron Mosby agrees.

"I think the uranium and nickel industries have really given the Goldfields a much more stable background," he said.

"I remember being here in the 70's: when the gold mines closed, everything closed. But now, with the strength of nickel on the worldwide market, particularly in China as it grows over the next number of decades, and uranium now just in its early days, we're going to see three strong commodities in the region."

Long conversation

KCGM's community relations manager, Danielle van Kampen, says the consultation process is about getting residents thinking about a future Kalgoorlie without a Pit.

"The Super Pit closure is going to be a long conversation, after all, we've got another 11 years to go and possibly more," she said.

"The closure date is not set in stone, as many economic and environmental factors play a part in how and when the Golden Mile resource is mined. However it's important that when that time does come, the community is prepared and the withdrawal of KCGM is done with agreed outcomes and objectives."

Mayor Yuryevich says KCGM's plans will form part of a strategy the City is developing to cope with change in the region over the next 10 to 20 years.

"Kalgoorlie-Boulder as a regional centre will prosper, I have no doubts about that," he said.

"What we do is continually look for opportunities where we can reinforce that."

At least one thing's for sure, the Goldfields community remains mighty proud of its giant hole in the ground.

As one resident so aptly put it:

"Long live the mighty hole! Long live the Super Pit!"

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First posted Fri Feb 19, 2010 1:00pm AEDT



Concerns raised in the recent survey over the KCGM Super Pit closure

Top Five Concerns

- Employment issues (difficulty obtaining more work, unemployment rate rises)
- Effect on real estate (house prices dropping, abandoned houses)
- Effect on local economy (small businesses would struggle, turnover goes down)
- Kalgoorlie-Boulder downsizing (morphing into a small town rather than further growing)
- Effects on families if they have to relocate due to no work here

Other concerns of interest

- It may happen sooner than planned and employees won't have enough warning
- Funding for community projects will go down because KCGM will no longer support groups
- Tourism industry will falter
- Social impact of the closure
- Environmental issues – a big scar in the earth
- People don't want to leave Kalgoorlie but they may have to, to find work
- The mine's resources won't be fully 'used up' before closure



Ideas from the *Kalgoorlie Miner's* own crack-team of left-brainers for the Super Pit of the future

- Kitty Prodonovich thinks it should be a massive amphitheatre, so Kalgoorlie-Boulder could host its own "In The Pit" version of the Leeuwin concert series. "Kylie in The Pit, Tom Jones In The Pit, Michael Buble In The Pit etc etc. The acoustics would be brilliant," she said.
- Janie Jones couldn't decide between rubbish dump revenue-spinner or diving centre with a wave-making machine.
- An anonymous source wanted to call it "The Super Pit SuperMax" so if Brian Burke ever gets caught again, it's one

hole he'd never be able to crawl out of.

- Julia Shadlow-Bath suggested you could have donkey trail-rides like they do at the Grand Canyon, a horseshoe walk-out bridge like they do at the Grand Canyon, and a Wet 'n' Wild Park like they do at the Grand Canyon. "If America is allowed to have their own Arc de Triomphe, then Australia is allowed to have their own Grand Canyon," she said.
- Fencing Contractor Geoff Foulkes-Taylor said he likes the idea of the restaurant "if we could find someone half-decent

to cook there." His other ideas were an airborne cable car-type ride for tourists and a 'Super Bungy!' bungy-jumping site.

- Sergeant Brad Robinson said he'd quite like a natural water park similar to Water Bomb Park in Bali. The park could have barbeque areas, grassy banks for picnic blankets, jet skiing areas, and boating areas..."the sky's the limit".

- Jack Tinetti doesn't believe it will ever close because "the ground's never gonna run out!" However if it did he wants to see a huge open-air suspension bridge strung over the Super Pit, Shrek-style.



A pit above the rest: The 650m deep Super Pit is a major part of life in the Goldfields.

Ideas from the KCGM survey for the future life of the Super Pit

- Army training barracks
- Luxury resort/hotel
- Ski park
- Housing
- Paintballing centre
- Railway line through the pit
- Memorial park/cemetery for miners who lost their lives
- Amphitheatre for music events
- Underwater casino – Kal Vegas
- Airport (level the tops of the dumps for a runway)
- Adventure park
- Fill it with water and stock it with fish – Kalgoorlie's own fishing spot
- Bio Dome



There's a hole lot of lovin'

By Adam Kolberg and Georgia Foulkes-Taylor

IT MIGHT just be a dirty great hole in the ground to some, but for locals the Super Pit is “their” dirty great hole in the ground, even if they are so kind as to let Kalgoorlie Consolidated Gold Mines manage it on their behalf.

Visible from space, the gaping maw is 1.5km wide, 4km long and 650m deep and growing.

And besides being big, the Super Pit is also a money-spinner for Kalgoorlie-Boulder.

Owned 50:50 by Newmont Australia and Barrick Gold Corporation, the Super Pit paid out royalties and other taxes of \$16.8 million in 2008, \$385.6m for local salaries and to local suppliers, and \$76m in additional flow-on income to the Goldfields region.

The Pit is Kalgoorlie-Boulder’s very own eighth unnatural wonder and – like it or not – a massive part of the city’s collective identity, being one of the very few open pits with a town on its doorstep.

The glorious backyard pit is also a major tourist drawcard. According to the most recent estimate by KCGM, the iconic Super Pit will cease mining around 2021.

So what should happen when the well-oiled gates finally close and the shuddering afternoon blasts are just a distant memory?

Whether you want a whale sanctuary, amphitheatre, sports venue, floating casino (as some have dreamed) or something a little more practical, behind all the froth and buzz is a community engaging with its own future.

KCGM recently undertook a survey to look at how the closure of the Super Pit might affect Kalgoorlie’s economy, businesses, employees, real estate market, population, and tourism industry.

Though full results are yet to be released, the *Kalgoorlie Miner* can report 410 people took part and more than half (57.2 per cent) were directly employed in the mining or services industry.

Interestingly, a big majority (83.6 per cent) of those surveyed had already thought about the impact the closure would have, which indicates the community is very interested in the closure and conscious of the impact it may have.

About 50 per cent said they would like to be involved in plans regarding the closure even though more than half (55.6 per cent) of those surveyed said they would “most likely” or “definitely not” be living in Kalgoorlie-Boulder in 2021 if that was the year the Super Pit was going to close.

But perhaps the rich and varied ideas concerning the future of a post-mining Super Pit are the most interesting, with locals expressing concern the closed site could become an issue for “hooligans” or “tree huggers”.

Popular ideas for the Pit of the future included an army training barracks, luxury resort or hotel, memorial park or cemetery for miners who lost their lives, housing and much more.

But this wasn’t the first time KCGM had called for these kinds of radical ideas.

In 2007 University of Western Australia lecturer Philip Goldswain brought 25 of his third-year school of architecture, landscape and visual arts students to Kalgoorlie for a KCGM-sponsored Super Pit design workshop.

Mr Goldswain said the young team was given a diverse brief, spent five days in the region and 12 weeks in the studio, and then the best students’ work was chosen for publication.

“There was no budget,” Mr Goldswain said.

“It was really an ideas competition, rather than a building competition.

“The Super Pit is an awe-inspiring thing, a remarkable landscape, the industrial sublime. Personally I think it should be retained as a post-industrial relic, especially as the industrial landscapes of Europe are being refurbished.”

UWA student Mladen Luketin took out the popular vote with his motorcycle-populated extreme sports post-modern sublime design.

The *Kalgoorlie Miner* asked its own group of budgetless, left-brainers what they wanted to see happen.

Uber-woman Kitty Prodonovich thought it should be turned into a massive amphitheatre, so Kalgoorlie-Boulder could host its own concert series for Kylie, Tom Jones and the Buble.

PR-Guru Donna Underwood wanted a giant swimming pool/water park.

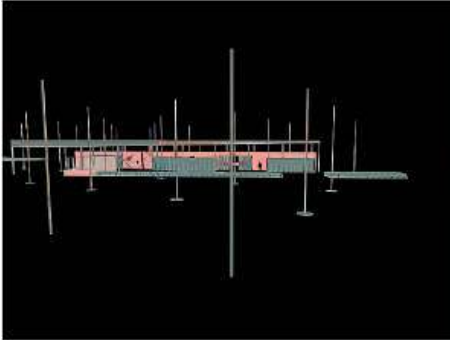
And Curtin’s Peta Jurgens wanted deep sea diving with an obligatory Spanish shipwreck to explore; the waterfall on the surface would be “optional”, she said.

But local font of knowledge Jack Tinetti said he didn’t believe the pit would ever close (“not gonna happen, mate”) and there’s a precedent to back up the wise old man as the closure date keeps pushing back.

In 2004 KCGM announced another “final” pit development date of 2017 in order to “put a line in the sand” as to its possible closure.

That date has since been revised (again) and the fact remains if there are advances in mining technology or more resources are discovered the mine life could be extended.

In the meantime, outspoken and innovative locals will keep dreaming about their very own Super Pit Thunderdome (yes, from Mad Max and Tina Turner fight-to-the-death fame), suspension bridge, casino or personal Grand Canyon – even if, deep down, they know the final result will most likely be a sound, regulated, inexpensive and infinitely saner proposition.



Pit chic: Another part of Claire Boujos's architectural designs.



Extreme sports: Another piece of Mladen Luketin's design for the future of the Super Pit – a Motocross Stadium. Photo: MLADEN LUKETIN



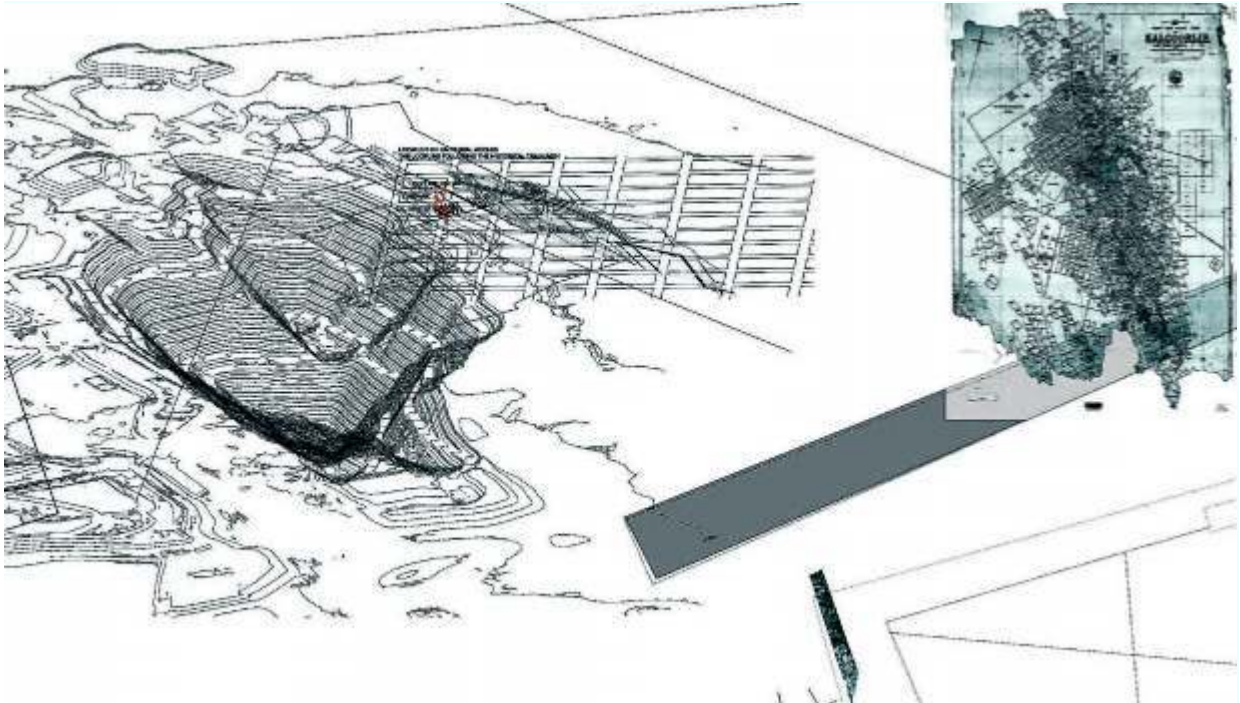
Innovative concept: One of UWA Architecture Student Mladen Luketin's designs for a Super Pit Interactive Centre. Photo: MLADEN LUKETIN



Future prospects: The American Grand Canyon looks to be a source of inspiration for the future of Australia's Super Pit.



Super Lake: An idea for the Super Pit is to fill it with water and allow it open for public diving. Photo: WEST AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM



Innovative concept: Claire Boujos's architectural drawings, one of the many from the team at UWA Architecture Students' Super Pit Interactive Centre. Photo: CLAIRE BOUJOS