

## Mines

**Supply Strategies** Fact: The Queensland Boulder Opal mine fields are spread over a band a few hundred kilometers wide with a 1000 km strike, making Southwest Queensland the vastest region of opalisation and the most prospective for opal mining for quality Australian opals in the new millennium. Currently though Queensland Boulder constitutes a small percentage of the total Australian opal mining industry turnover, despite the facts Australian opals were first found here and their occurrence is in a multitude of forms and varieties.

**Positioning** Opaline's production strategy is to concentrate on the Boulder Opal mining regions of Queensland. Our offices and opal processing facilities in both Winton QLD and Lightning Ridge NSW are positioned at the northern and southern ends respectively of the abovementioned 1000 km strike zone.

**Field Buyers** With over 45 years experience in Australian opals and opal mining, we have developed good relations with opal miners throughout the country, thus effecting opal supply agreements and strong ties with major Black Opal and Boulder Opal producers. Field buying trips for opals are carried out on a regular basis covering over 50,000 km per annum within the strike zone.

**Our Opal Mines** Opaline's mines are highly efficient and productive operations which have been instrumental in the development of opal stockpiles.

**Western Queensland Opal Mines:** 100% owned and operated - 5 Open Cut sites.

**Vergemont:** (180 km South of Winton) Mining commenced in 2004 and the main operation was completed in 2006. Several mining and an Exploration Permit (EP) are being prospected therefrom. This area is renowned for its boulder pancakes which contain luminous dark-based opal. Note\* The hill outlined in the photo below has since been removed to a depth of 40 feet.

**Franklin:** (270km West of Winton)

This opal mine was operated by exclusive agreement with the land and tender holders. The project was vast in its scope and was completed in 2004 resulting in one of the largest single excavations for opals in Queensland opal mining history. More than 1,000,000 cubic meters of dirt were moved over a 3 year period. A 4Ha dam now graces the site.

**Brighton:** ( 300km West of Winton)

Opaline has Exploration Permits covering hundreds of square kilometers which it is currently surveying . These encompass entire opal fields Franklin and Brighton. Five major Opal deposits have been identified. Full scale mining commenced in 2007, with several mine sites covering nearly 100hectares. One is a particularly large system which is now being scrutinised and reserves are estimated at more than \$30 million. Mining leases have been obtained over these first grade deposits, wherein maximum average depth is estimated at 18 meters making it a low cost, high margin resource with a long duration.

At present heavy machinery operated there on include two D9H Bulldozers and two 40 ton Excavators. The 'Brighton your day' project is estimated to be more than a 15 year operation with greater than 20 hectares disturbance. Therefore, the project is envisaged to result in arguably the largest opal mining venture ever undertaken.

**Opalton:** (100km South of Winton)

This opal mining area encompasses many famous old diggings, dating over a century; it has proved to contain the highest concentration of Australian opals in Queensland, if not Australia. Although Opalton is largely a Fossicking Reserve, Opaline's has procured Mining Leases in one of a few productive areas designated for open cut opal mining. In addition, a surrounding Exploration Permit contains vast tracts of virgin opal mining ground with excellent prospects for deposits of the fiery Black Boulder Opal for which Opalton is renowned.

Heavy Machinery operated thereon to extract the opals include a Caldwell Drill and 35-Ton Excavator.

**Mines in New South Wales :**

**Lightning Ridge Opals:**(Within a 15 km radius of the township, P.O.)

A Prospecting program for opal mining is underway, including aerial reconnaissance, 9 Inch Auger drilling, shallow trenching and geological interpretation by Prof. Charles Phipps whose experience in Lightning Ridge dates back forty years. Open cut mining is proposed to commence by 2015.

**References:**

DISCOVER QUEENSLAND OPALS, Robert Brown, 2008. (Opaline's operation at Franklin)