

You Talk, I'll Listen

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HARVEY-WAROONA

REPORTER

West Australian Newspapers Publication

www.harveyreporter.com.au • Harvey
 • Australind • Brunswick • Leschenault • Waroona • Yarloop • Binningup • Preston Beach
PHONE 9729 1268 \$1 outside distribution area **Tuesday, May 25, 2010** **7707 Copies**



Making science fun to learn

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Mud turns to red gold

By KEN UTTING

AFTER years of searching, Alcoa has found a tested, viable use for alumina residue that has been accumulating near its Wagerup refinery.

The stockpiled residue comprises 50 per cent sand and 50 per cent red mud.

Researchers in Kwinana have developed a carbonation and wash system to process this bauxite residue producing a by-product known as Red Sand.

A total of 2500 cubic metres of

this sand was recently used as road base to widen the Greenlands Road access to the new Forrest Highway near Pinjarra.

Sand supplies, particularly in the South West, are in decline and Australian construction companies are looking for alternatives.

Alcoa's Red Sand has the potential to fill this need and the company plans to produce 500,000 tonnes annually.

"It's literally sand, that is red in colour, which comes from our bauxite residue so it's essentially crushed rock," said Alcoa's residue

technical manager David Cooling. "Research spanning more than 20 years has identified a number of possible sustainable uses for bauxite residue, one of which is Red Sand.

"Not only does Red Sand have the potential to be a cost-effective alternative to general purpose sand, but it has also shown to be a high quality construction sand thanks to its excellent drainage and strength characteristics."

As well as being a substitute for increasingly scarce supplies of quarry sand, Red Sand could limit

the need to clear bushland for sand quarries and cut the requirement for residue storage facilities.

Alcoa is a foundation member and key industry supporter of the WA-based Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Resource Processing which has driven much of the residue re-use research effort to date.

CSBP trials have consistently shown bauxite residue has the potential to become a useful material.

Alkaloam from the red mud is also said to have potential.



Red Sand was used as a road base for Greenlands Road connecting the two highways at Pinjarra.

Beef impresses

