

Hancock and SQM launch joint acquisition of Azure

Hancock Prospecting Pty Ltd (**Hancock**) has partnered with Sociedad Química y Minera de Chile S.A. (**SQM**) (together, the **Joint Bidders**) offering to jointly acquire Azure Minerals Limited (**Azure**) by way of a scheme of arrangement for A\$3.70 cash per Azure share (**Scheme**), or if the Scheme is unsuccessful then by way of an off-market takeover offer for A\$3.65 cash per Azure share (**Takeover**) (together, the **Transaction**).

Hancock and SQM are Azure's two largest shareholders already holding a collective 37.8% of all Azure shares. The partnership brings together Hancock – Australia's most successful private resource company with proven mining exploration, project development and operational expertise in West Australia, and SQM – one of the world's leading lithium producers, to provide an opportunity for Azure shareholders to receive higher cash consideration and greater execution certainty in realising increased value for their Azure shares.

Azure's Board has unanimously recommended the Transaction and encouraged all Azure shareholders to support it (subject to a favourable independent expert's report and in the absence of a superior proposal), highlighting the attractiveness of the higher cash offered under the Transaction and pointing out continued elevated market volatility and deterioration in lithium prices.

Two of Azure's major shareholders, Creasy Group (12.8%) and Delphi Group (10.2%) have confirmed to Azure that they intend to sell all of their shares to the Joint Bidders, in the absence of a superior proposal for Azure.

Azure owns 60% of the pre-resource Andover lithium project in West Australia (**Andover**). In taking a long term approach to project development, Hancock and SQM are uniquely placed to apply their significant project development expertise and manage the substantial challenges associated with progressing Andover. In addition to the ongoing softness in lithium markets and pricing, Azure's share price may fall substantially if the Transaction does not proceed.

Hancock and SQM invite all remaining Azure shareholders to support the Transaction and take up this compelling opportunity to realise certain cash value for their Azure shares, and avoid further exposure to the risks and uncertainties of an investment in Azure.

Hancock's CEO, Garry Korte, said: *Under the leadership of our Executive Chairman Mrs Gina Rinehart AO, Hancock is delighted to team up with SQM to pursue an acquisition of joint control of Azure. This powerful partnership brings together the complementary skills of our respective companies across West Australian mining exploration, development, operation and processing for the long term. We are pleased to provide Azure shareholders with this compelling offer to receive substantial cash value for their shares despite weakening market conditions. With Hancock reviewing a number of early stage lithium prospects, this offer continues Mrs Rinehart's substantial support for the West Australian mining industry. As Mrs Rinehart says, "when mining does well, so do Australians". To which she has added, given the difficulty of getting mining approvals in Australia conversely, "when mining doesn't do well, nor do Australians".*

For further details on the Transaction (including applicable conditions and mechanics) please refer to the public releases made by Azure and SQM. Hancock and SQM will work with Azure to provide all necessary information to Azure shareholders as soon as possible, to enable Azure shareholders to support the Transaction and take up this offer for their shares.
