

Media statement from Vantage Goldfields on latest developments in the Lily Mine disaster

Time of release: 15:15

Date of release: 13 February 2016

Search and rescue mission at Lily Mine suffers serious setback after another major collapse of ground early Saturday morning

Search and rescue mission suspended and all underground teams evacuated because of resultant unstable and highly dangerous conditions; mission can only be resumed once full geotechnical assessment of the stability of the open pit area and underground operations is complete

At approximately 05:00 on Saturday 13 February, Lily Mine experienced a second major collapse of ground on the southern wall of the open pit area, widening the exposed sinkhole and sending more rocks and other debris into the underground mining area.

A decision was made by mine management to immediately evacuate all underground search and rescue teams in the interests of their safety. Regrettably the search and rescue operation for the three missing Lily Mine employees, Ms Pretty Mabuza, Mr Solomon Nyarenda and Ms Yvonne Mnisi, has been suspended until a full geotechnical assessment has been completed and the risk levels of underground operations has been established.

“We share the frustration and disappointment of the families of our missing colleagues, and the broader community, that the search and rescue mission has experienced this major setback. We were, however, left with no alternative as the situation is currently too unstable to safely continue with the underground mission,” said Mike McChesney, CEO of Vantage Goldfields.

“Unfortunately it is simply not possible at this stage to provide any definitive time frames on when the geotechnical assessment will be finalised. Some of the world’s best qualified specialists in this field have been called in following this morning’s collapse of ground to lead the geotechnical assessment, which needs to be comprehensive and thorough to ensure that we don’t experience any further tragedy at Lily Mine by exposing the rescue teams to even greater risk in a highly unstable underground environment,” said McChesney.

The Minister of Mineral Resources is paying his second visit to the Lily Mine disaster site today (Saturday 13 Feb) and together with the union, has been fully briefed on this latest setback to the search and rescue efforts, which have continued without pause for nine days until this morning’s latest setback.

Ends.

Further information will follow as and when available.