

# Mary Valley line is a plus for mining plans

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Mary Valley

THE rediscovery of manganese in the Mary Valley could be another massive boon for the local economy and the Mary Valley Rattler, with Australian mining company Eclipse Metals expressing keen interest in the fact that a train track runs through the middle of their proposed exploration field.

Eclipse Metals plans to send a team of geologists into the Valley in 2014 to identify target sites - initially near Amamoor - for drilling to test for high-grade manganese and gold deposits.

More than 32,700 tonnes of the ore was pulled out of the Valley last century, but company spokesman Carl Popal said this week there would have to be at least 100,000 tonnes of it in the Valley to make mining economically viable.

A desk-top survey of the Valley by Eclipse, based on historical data of what grade and quantity of manganese was extracted from Amamoor, Eel Creek, Dagon, Skyring Creek and other parts of the Valley between 1915 and 1960, has encouraged the company to move forward with exploration.

Mr Popal said having a train track "running through the guts" of the field helped, as Eclipse would most likely have to invest heavily in the infrastructure to get the alloy out of the ground and to Brisbane.

Based on a rough price of \$2000-\$2500 per tonne, the Valley has already produced the equivalent of about \$81 million worth of manganese, but it needs to promise closer to \$240 million worth to make mining it worthwhile.

Mr Popal said the depth of the manganese was unknown until drill testing was completed, but that based on the data most of it appeared to be on the surface, making it easier and cheaper to access.

Manganese partners with iron ore to make good quality steel, and BHP has recently increased its production of iron ore.

Australia currently produces about 5 million tonnes of beneficiated manganese ore, with exports worth about \$1 billion a year.