

Platinum prospect

No mineral frustrates Australian explorers quite like platinum. The outback routinely produces “sniffs” of the stuff, but a commercially viable deposit has never been found. That’s one of the reasons behind the strong support for Australian explorers who try their luck in the home of platinum, South Africa, and a potential reason for the future support for a small company with its foot on a very promising prospect in the Philippines.

Rusina Mining owns the Acoje project, located about 300 kilometres north-west of Manila, far from the troubles with Islamic rebels in the south of the country. The latest drilling has returned excellent results, including one 28-metre section assaying 5.58 grams a tonne of what is known in the trade as “3E” — which translates into the three key elements in a platinum project: platinum itself, plus palladium, plus gold.

The company has issued a standard “we’re excited” statement with the drill result, although the market has failed to react. The stock is stuck around the 17¢ mark, well short of the peak of 41¢ reached in March when interest in Rusina and Acoje bubbled over and the share price went into orbit for a couple of weeks.

Having had their fun, the speculators appear to have abandoned Rusina, which is not such as bad thing because platinum exploration and, more particularly, the production of platinum is not a job that can be rushed. It is a highly prized metal (and highly priced at about \$US885 an ounce) but it is also damnably difficult to find, mine and refine.

This is where Acoje has a few advantages. For starters, it is not new. Rusina’s tenements have a history of mineral production dating back to

1935, when it was a source of chromite, a mineral often found in association with platinum. There was also a period of nickel production, another pointer to the rich mineralisation in the area.

Unravelling the complex geological structures is the challenge that lies ahead for Rusina. Over the past few years, the company has sunk close to 150 holes to confirm the presence of platinum group metals and nickel. The most recent work has been

now a case of watching the drilling campaign at Acoje unfold.

FLYING START AND FINNISH

Another Australian working in a remote location, and also being hit by a similar “distance discount” applied by investors at home, is Vulcan Resources. Rather than the tropics, Vulcan has chosen the frozen north of Finland as a suitable place to make a name, and possibly develop a nickel and/or copper



probing deeper than before to confirm what is described as “lode continuity at depth” — in other words, as the drilling goes deeper, the mineralisation still looks good.

Australian investors have been slow off the mark with the Rusina story, but it is a different matter in London, where there was a mini-stampede earlier this year to get a slice of a \$6.4-million placement made to institutional and private investors as part of the stock’s listing on the Alternative Investment Market of the London Stock Exchange. The rush up to the 12-month share price high of 41¢ was largely a function of buying generated by people who missed out on the placement.

With cash in hand, a large and growing tenement position, a history of mineral production, and strong prices for platinum and nickel, it is

mine based on strong early results from one of three possible projects.

The latest drilling at the Kuhmo prospect, which featured rich assays of nickel, copper and platinum group elements, has triggered some interest in the stock, with speculators pushing Vulcan up by a very attractive 75% in a matter of days, from about 24¢ to 42¢.

What caught the eye of Vulcan’s followers were results such as a 1.2-metre thick section grading 2.1% nickel, plus 0.9% copper and 2.9 grams a tonne of platinum and its sister element, palladium. No one dares call that result “ore-grade” because of the need to be careful with exploration terminology, but it can be viewed as highly encouraging even by the most cautious geologist.

Vulcan’s chairman, Alistair Cowden, likens the mineralisation at Kuhmo to