

## Rio Tinto predicts new copper mine will be built in Western Australia



By [Darren Gray](#)

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Jean-Sebastien Jacques, the chief executive of global miner Rio Tinto, says he is very confident that a new copper mine will be built at the site of a copper discovery in Western Australia recently confirmed by the miner.

But whether or not Rio Tinto actually builds and operates that mine is another question, and one Mr Jacques says is too early to answer.



Rio Tinto chief executive Jean-Sebastien Jacques pictured on Friday with Florence Charger. *CREDIT: JOSEPH MAYERS*

Mr Jacques gave the bright assessment of Rio's copper discovery at the company's new Amrun bauxite mine on Cape York near Weipa, after an official ceremony declaring the \$2.6 billion bauxite mine open.

He made the comments about the WA discovery, which Rio confirmed to the market in late February as it reported its full year results, in response to a question about the miner's possible growth agenda.

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"Early days, [but] we have disclosed to the market the outcome of the first 24 drill holes, and what we can see clearly is there is copper, there is gold, there is silver.

"We have no doubt, absolutely no doubt, that there will be a copper mine built there. The question for us is, is it going to be a Rio mine or not," he said.

Mr Jacques said "much more" drilling needed to be undertaken to gain a better understanding of what was underground. Important metallurgical work also needed to be done to get a better understanding of the recovery rate possible for copper, gold and silver.

"We believe that by the end of this year we should have a better view of where we're going to land on this one," he said.

Rio's copper discovery, in the Paterson Ranges of the Pilbara, did not surprise industry observers who were aware that Rio had constructed a large camp in the area.

"We have a pretty healthy pipeline of exploration targets, and one of them that could come on line pretty quickly is this one," he said.

Meanwhile, Mr Jacques said Rio's "Pioneer Hub" would be established in Brisbane this year.

The Pioneer Hub would quarantine a group of exceptional young people from around the world to come together and ponder what Rio might look like in decades to come.

The group would be encouraged to consider big questions like should old mining stockpiles be mined again, should huge mine trucks be rented rather than owned and should Rio partner with technology companies like Microsoft and Apple.

The development of the so-called Pioneer Hub has been inspired by the pace at which technology start-ups are working and the questions that they are posing about the future.