

# Richland steps into Gemmies

**Di Stanley**

di.stanley@cqnews.com.au

CAPRICORN Sapphires could be the brand that takes the flawless beauty of natural stones from the Gemfields to a favoured place in the jewellery boxes of international buyers.

London-listed coloured gemstone miner Richland Resources has already recovered sapphires from test samples and will start mining in May on its two leases, with a sorting operation based in Emerald.

From June, the first Capricorn Sapphires will hit

the market as fully certificated, ethically mined gemstones with guaranteed proof of origin.

Central Highlands Development Corporation head Sandra Hobbs said it was a multi-faceted opportunity to partner with Richland Resources in a tourism campaign to lure overseas tourists to the Central Highlands and its unique attractions.

“We’re excited in a couple of ways in that they’re going to be employing locals and training locals to meet their requirements both for sorting and for the mine,”

Mrs Hobbs said.

“They are also keen to grow the opportunity in partnership with the CHDC and businesses locally to promote the region globally for its tourism opportunities and diversity - not only with sapphires and the growth of the Gemfields but the whole region.

“The company is keen to be part of the region. “They want to work in conjunction with the people on the Gemfields and it is really positive.” After a presentation to the Central Highlands Council, Mayor Peter Maguire was

confident the company, which closed its tanzanite mine in Tanzania this year to concentrate on its central Queensland venture, had a future in the region.

“They are talking about all sorts of wonderful things if it all falls into place,” Cr Maguire said.

In a statement, Richland Resources said the development and mining of Pit 1 was the focus for 2015.

The company’s two mining leases cover about 490 hectares, with a measured sapphire recovery of about 109 million carats.