

The Director of Mines,  
Hobart.

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Dear Sir,

ASBESTOS - SPERO RIVER

On the 17th. instant, I examined an area at the Spero River where Mr. A. Barrett reported that he had discovered asbestos.

Leaving Strahan at seven a.m. I travelled to the southern end of Birch Inlet in a motor boat and then followed a foot track for a distance of 11 miles to the Spero River where I camped for the night. The following day I followed a timber track down the Spero River for about three miles to the locality of the deposit.

This area consists of an abrupt hill, about 300 feet in elevation, abutting directly onto the south or left bank of the river and is about half a mile from the point where this river enters Spero Bay.

The hill mass is mainly made up of a dark colored intrusive igneous rock which has been partly serpentised and small width veins of asbestos are to be found over portions across the 30 chain width of this hill and for a distance of 40 chains from the river side in a north-south line. These veins are irregular in size and conformity but the general tendency of strike appears to be in a north south line and they appear mostly in the basic igneous rock.

Several veins of green-yellow colored serpentine were noted and also a strong make of greenish grey schistose material was located on the western side of the hill. This material is very friable and strongly magnetic and exhibits polarity. The needle of a Brunton compass was deflected 20 degrees from meridian north at one place, the deflection being west. There does not appear to be any asbestos in this schistose rock.

The general rock mass is steeply jointed and has a stike nearly due north with a slight dip to the west. Similar type of country continues on the north bank of the river but I was unable to find a way through the dense scrub that surrounds this area and could not make an examination of it.

On the South West portion of this hill the surface is covered with a gossan about one acre in area, and the summit and portion of the sides have a light covering of ocean gravels, mostly fine grained quartzites. The vegetation cover is very light.

No prospecting work of importance has been done, but the conformity of the hill lends itself to the opening up of the best portions of the asbestos with the minimum of labor. A steep gully cuts directly into the hill from the west side almost in the centre of the main body and benches can be cut along this that should expose the formation very well, while the

north side consists of a steep side about 30 degree slope from the river flat to the top of the hill. It would be a very easy proposition for mining by open cut methods, and transport by sea is possible under favourable weather conditions.

The similarity of this formation to that at Asbestos Point in Macquarie Harbour is very marked and the observed stike of formation of Asbestos Point, when projected, would cross the Spero River within this area. I would consider that the Spero deposit will be richer than that at Asbestos Point as the veins appear to be over a much wider area and are closer together.

Under separate cover I am forwarding some specimens collected, which are labelled.

Nos. 1 & 3 are from the gully on the west side of the hill.

No. 2 from the south end on top of hill.

No. 4 from north side near river.

No. 5 is a piece of the gossan capping.

No. 6 is green serpentine from west side.

In envelopes, is a sample of the greenish grey schistose material and a mineral that is noted to occur occasionally in basic rock in stockwork vein formation.

No. 7 specimen is an olivine igneous type of rock noted in the creek beds about from two to three miles along the track north of the Spero River the location is marked on the sketch plan enclosed.

The track leading north from the Spero River crosses numerous creeks and gullies most of which fall in a westerly direction I have marked approximately the position of four of the main creeks and if these were examined to about 3 miles to the west the asbestos formation should be located in their beds. I was unfortunately not able to do this as I had the bad luck to strain a muscle in my knee during the start of the trip and this gradually became worse and I had great difficulty in walking back to the boat.

As there appears to be nearly a hundred square miles of country, between the Point Hibbs - Spero River line and north to Asbestos Point, that does not appear to have been opened up for prospecting, I would consider that a track from the Spero River along the line of the supposed strike of the serpentine zone to Asbestos Point would be of value to the development of prospecting.

Mr. Barratt said that he was prepared to do some prospecting work on this formation if he could obtain sustenance allowance for himself and partner. I would recommend that this be granted for a period of four weeks, and, if the party worked on the lines that I suggested to them, some definite information as to the value of the deposit should be obtained.

Yours faithfully,

K. A. Rae,  
INSPECTOR OF MINES.

20th January, 1942.