

## Capricorn Gems and Central Queensland Sapphires

### **A short history of Sapphire Mining in Central Queensland**

Sapphires were originally mined in Central Queensland in the late 1800s – early pioneers, railway workers and stockman found the gems and didn't know what they were.

By the early 1900s, the Central Queensland region had become the world's largest producer of sapphires. The gems were sent to London (the center of the global gemstone business back then) and distributed across Europe. During World War II the business declined and in the 1980's, mining went from hand-mining to more mechanization (with excavators and trucks).

In the 1980's and 90's most of the sapphire rough was sent to Thailand for cutting and processing and Thailand started buying stones in quantity. At this time Thailand was mining and processing its own sapphires and placing them on the world market. Many of the so called Thai Blue sapphires were Central Queensland Sapphires.

Today most of the mining is very small-scale with a couple of larger commercial operations. Most mining is done by either a family operation or a partnerships.

Here is a link to the Mindat ( <https://www.mindat.org/a/about> ) page on the CQ Gemfields.  
<https://www.mindat.org/loc-12014.html>

### **How are these stones mined ethically?**

Sapphire mining is controlled by the Queensland State Government - Department of Natural Resources and Mines.... there are clear regulations that all miners must comply with.

Miners are required to apply for a mining permit/mining lease, have the resources to be able to mine and provide security deposits to cover any shortfall in mining licence arrangements.

As Australia is a western country, its quite different than many other countries that mine gemstones. Regulations are established under rule of legislated laws. That means labour (appropriate wages and conditions), health and safety equipment for all workers, and other environmental and rehabilitation regulations.

### **How is the environment protected?**

When the mining operation finishes (open pit) , miners are obligated to reclaim the land and restore it to its previous condition. This includes leveling the ground and planting grasses and trees where appropriate.

The scale of the mining doesn't drastically impinge on the environment to any great degree and the region where most of the mining takes place is very remote and the footprint of the mining is very small.

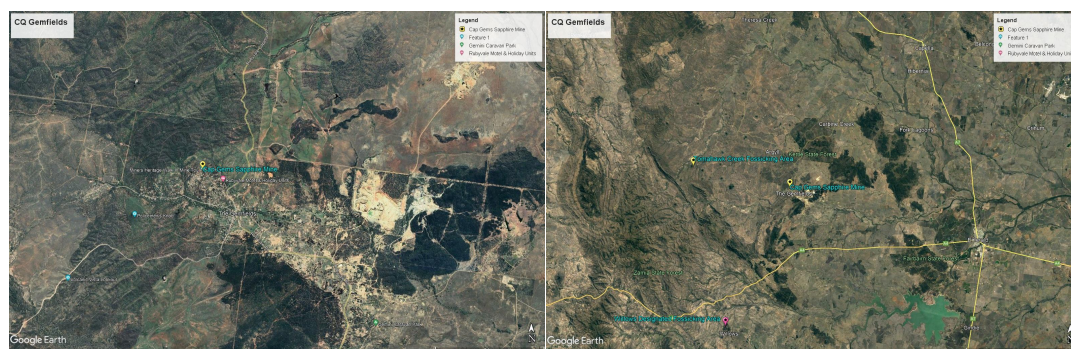
This image below shows the relative small impact of mining on the overall landscape. The image on the left is a relative close up of the Central Queensland Gemfields (12km altitude) whilst the right hand is an image at higher altitude (150kms).

Latitude 23°25'13.93"S

Longitude 147°44'8.70"

The cream/white element on the image is a pebble Quarry (to extract round quartz pebbles). Surrounding the quarry are commercial sapphire mines with other mines seen in the region to the south west of the quarry.

Further west of the quarry where the structures are located are the underground workings.



### **How do you handle traceability?**

My business partner Rod Beattie, sources the stones directly from the miners and from our own small underground mine located at Bedford Hill Rubyvale.

Latitude 23°24'31.68"S

Longitude 147°41'23.23"

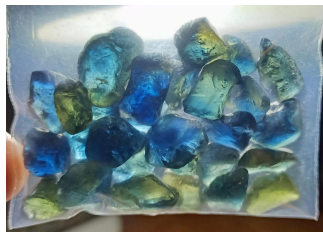
Rod was a miner himself in the 80s and has very close contacts with the miners/residents in the area. He maintains those relationships.

Capricorn Gems maintains information on each and every sapphire cut and sold and can nominate the actual mine that the sapphire originated from on the gemfields. Mine names include the Bluebird, Scrub Lead, Bedford Hill, Rice Bowl and Reward.

Capricorn Gems also works with a local CQ miner to undertake mild heating of some sapphires. Some sapphires are heated to remove internal elements (silica etc) and make the gem more vibrant and improve marketability. Heating of sapphires is an approved practice.

### **HERE'S WHAT OUR SOURCING PROCESS LOOKS LIKE**

Rod extracts the material from our mine or acquires the rough gem material directly from the miners, he visits the miners regularly, then he grades, separates, and preforms the stones in his workshop at home.



Because Central Queensland sapphires can be multi-colored, it's important to orient the sapphire in the right direction to maximize the beauty of the gem.

The preformed stones are forwarded to Thailand for final cutting and polishing. One of our associates, Andrew receives the stones and takes them to our cutter. We work closely with the cutter and his staff to ensure quality is maintained.



Andrew collects the gems from the cutter and undertakes a quality check to ensure material is cut to our specifications. Andrew sends the parcel to Rod in Australia. Rod sends the stones to me and I market and sell the gemstones to designers and jewelers worldwide.

Capricorn Gems webshops are available to be accessed by all verified designer makers. We only sell wholesale to designer makers.

Ian Bone  
April 2022