

Fuel for Thought

A Rose by any Other Name...

As an old romantic, of course I love that Romeo and Juliet quote – ‘a rose by any other name would smell as sweet’. As I understand it, it means that it doesn’t really matter what you call something – it is what it is - the name doesn’t change it.



Bruce Andersen
Site Superintendent,
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But it also seems to me that a little word can sometimes make a big difference.

When I tell people that our project is based on ‘oil shale’, they often start talking about the ‘shale oil revolution’ – the discovery of new ways of drilling crude oil mainly in the USA - which has led to new oil resources being opened up over the past few years.

But what we do here at QER is really quite different. The rocks we mine actually don’t contain any oil. Instead, they contain small particles of a naturally occurring waxy substance called ‘kerogen’. You can’t easily see the kerogen as it is fine grained and distributed through the rock. Kerogen was formed by accumulating algae and plant matter in a lake, some 30 to 40 million years ago.

Heating kerogen rich rocks, in a fully contained process plant, transforms the kerogen into oil which leaves the rock and can be processed into high quality transport fuel.

Because of all the confusion with ‘shale oil’ or ‘tight oil’ we now prefer to talk about ‘kerogen oil’; kerogen-based fuels; kerogen deposits; or kerogen shale, rather than talking about oil shale. It is more accurate (because oil shale doesn’t contain any oil) and kerogen oil is the terminology recommended by the International Energy Agency.

No doubt it will take a little while for people to get used to that terminology. I know it’s taking me a bit of time. Old habits die hard – maybe I’ll make it my New Year’s resolution!

From all of us at QER, Happy New Year to you and your family. We hope that 2017 is a very joyful and prosperous one for you.



Creating new fuels for Australia

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