

Transformation of the Palabora Copper Smelter from a Captive Smelter to a Toll / Custom Smelter

D. Brazier, W. Laing, and D. Nixon

Palabora Mining Company, Phalaborwa, South Africa

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Abstract – The Palabora copper smelter has operated for the past 38 years, treating concentrates produced at the mine site. Palabora has reduced captive material by almost 40 per cent with the transition from a large open-cast to a smaller underground mine. The smelter and refinery complex was designed to treat 120 kt contained copper units per annum, with the underground only supplying 70 per cent of the feed. The agreed strategy was to import enough concentrates to maximise production and reduce operational unit costs. This transition has presented the Palabora management with new challenges both in technical and financial aspects.

