

Industry champion's legacy inspires

A Western Australian gold and nickel exploration company is the inaugural recipient of an award named after a man gone but not forgotten. *Australian Mining's* WA correspondent Jamie Wade writes.

Craig Oliver, a former chief executive officer for the Western Australian mining company Western Areas NL, was one of six board members of Sundance Resources Limited who were tragically killed in a plane crash in the Congo in June 2010.

He was 46.

The loss of Craig left many bereaved, but his legacy as an inspirational and passionate champion for the mining industry will live on through an award named in his honour.

The Craig Oliver Award will be presented annually to an 'all round', small-to-mid cap Australian mining company which has excelled in several areas.

These include exploration, mining, corporate, environmental and community.

Independence Group managing director Chris Bonwick was humbled to receive the inaugural award in a moving presentation ceremony at an explorers' conference in Fremantle this year.

However, his acceptance speech was overshadowed by the recollections of the man who touched many.

In presenting the award

alongside Craig's family, industry peers and colleagues, Western Areas managing director Julian Hanna reflected on Craig's legacy.

"Craig was a wonderful and enthusiastic character who made a really lasting contribution to the mining industry over his 20 year career," Hanna said.

"He was an all-rounder, you couldn't hold him back.

"He got involved in every aspect of mining.

"If it was exploration, he'd be out on the drill rig. If it was mining, he'd be down in the mine telling the operators how to operate an air leg or where the jumbo should be drilling.

"In financing, he'd be rubbing shoulders with the top funds in New York; and in developing projects he'd be telling colleagues to 'ramp up mill production'.

"He was just a wonderful enthusiast."

As an advocate for the industry, Craig was also remembered as one of the key people behind the successful anti-resources tax rally in Perth in mid-2010.

"He really was quite a

political character as well and a driving force for axing the mining tax," Bonwick said.

"It was Craig who got all those wonderful banners printed. It was Craig who got Gina Rinehart and Andrew Forrest up on the truck. And I think the truck itself came from Hampton Hill Station which was part of his family heartland in the goldfields.

"Craig was on the phone working politicians and we all know the results of that campaign. It was hugely effective and certainly had Craig's name written all over it."

Companies were nominated for the Craig Oliver Award based on their 'all round' contribution to the resources sector in WA, encompassing the key areas of exploration, development, mining, corporate or social activities.

In winning the award, Independence Group NL beat a quality field of Western Australian resources companies, including Beadell Resources Ltd, Magma Metals Ltd, Northern Star Resources Ltd, Sandfire Resources NL, Silver Lake Resources Ltd, Southern Gold Ltd as well as Tanami Gold NL.



The late Craig Oliver, for whom the award is named.

Independence Group's flagship mine is the Long nickel mine in Kambalda, Western Australia. It also owns 30 per cent of the AngloGold Ashanti-operated Tropicana gold project, also in Western Australia.

In accepting the trophy made of silver, titanium, copper and gold, Chris Bonwick praised colleagues and the mining industry.

"There's probably been 12 decent ore bodies found in the last 12 months by various companies. Not all of those are in Australia, but certainly our industry here is strong and vibrant," he said.

The award was judged by representatives from each of the sponsoring companies including prominent resources journalist Ross Louthean. He said Independence was a deserving winner.

"Independence has some really talented geoscientists in their team and been putting runs on the board for years," he told *Australian Mining*.

"I've followed Benambra from when Western Mining made the original discovery and there's been technical

issues for a lot of companies and I think Independence has nipped them out. Time will tell. And their new discovery: the Bentley deposit – near the Jaguar deposit – sounds really interesting; the cash flow they should get from those operations will be good."

"They've picked up the Western Mining database for diamonds but also the De Beers' database for Australia; diamonds are also an indicator of minerals and that led them to the Tropicana discovery. Their databases also helped them with the work they were doing on the joint venture with Southern Boulder for the Rosie Nickel Project.

"They've been making good cash flow out of the Long Nickel Mine and been ploughing it back into exploration-development – as well as rewarding shareholders."

The Craig Oliver award will be presented annually at the RIU Explorers Conference to an Australian company which has excelled in performance during the last 12 months through their activities either within Australia or offshore.



Drilling work being carried out at Independence Group's Tropicana deposit.