

Corobrik denies coal mining ambitions amid environmental concerns

Brick manufacturer Corobrik finds itself in a controversy sparked by concerns it's transitioning into coal mining. However, the company insists it's simply removing obstacles to keep clay mining operations going.



Corobrik Rietvlei quarry

The company, which operates near the Rietvlei Nature Reserve, recently came under fire after the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE) granted a mining licence. This move raised fears of coal production in the ecologically sensitive area.

"We are not in the coal-mining business and have no intention of doing so," said Corobrik CEO Nick Booth. He emphasised that the licence is standard for surface mining operations, which Corobrik has held since the 1980s for its clay mining.



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The recent controversy arose when routine drilling ahead of clay extraction at the open-cast pit revealed coal deposits. Booth explained that this is a normal process, but the thickness of the coal seam was unexpected.

When continued clay mining exposed the coal, Corobrik applied for the licence to remove the obstruction and access the underlying clay needed for their brickmaking process.

Commitment to sustainability

Booth notes that any authorised mining operation, even for clay, requires strict environmental compliance and monitoring plans overseen by the DMRE.

"Our commercial consideration," Booth explains, "is that the coal is now overlying the carbonaceous clay deposits we



Corobrik CEO Nick Booth

Corobrik highlights its commitment to environmental sustainability with existing measures, but concedes the coal poses a risk of contamination or spontaneous combustion, creating a complex issue for removal – even with nearby coal-mining operations in the catchment area.

"We have no long-term plan around the coal," Booth maintains. "The coal is actually an obstacle at this point."

While the company projects only a seven-year lifespan for the coal deposits, they anticipate continuing clay mining operations well into the 2050s.

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