

Deep-water port for iron-ore exports



Colin Barnett, premier of Western Australia, left, and Richard O'Brien, chief executive of Newmont Mining Corp, at the opening of the Bodanigon gold mine last month. A potential deep-water port at Anketell was first identified over four decades ago. Photo: Bloomberg News

BY BEN CREAGH

A NEW deep-water port for the export of iron ore from Western Australia is under consideration. The port at Anketell is 30km east of Karratha in the Pilbara region, and would potentially be used by Fortescue Metals Group Ltd, China Metallurgical Group Corp and API Management Pty Ltd, the Western Australian government said in a statement.

Premier Colin Barnett is hopeful the trio of companies will become "foundation investors in the new precinct". He added that "the government will work with these companies, or an infrastructure provider to develop the project, with plans to commence operations by 2015".

Anketell, first identified more than 40 years ago, would ultimately include a port with an export capacity of over 350Mt/y, and an industrial area covering more than 1,400ha, Premier Barnett said.

The port would be subject to a size

limit to protect the viability of existing ports.

The West Australian government will spend A\$3.5 million (US\$3.17 million) during the next three years to plan and prepare an Industrial Precinct Development Agreement for the project. This would include commercial, legal and engineering advice.

Western Australia is contributing 70% of the nation's exports to China, which is the world's largest buyer of iron ore. Rio Tinto Group has forecast that China will consume more of the steelmaking ingredient in the next five years than Australia has shipped in its history.

"The strength of WA's iron-ore exports and the growth plans of current users are testing the capacity of the existing Pilbara ports," Mr Barnett said. The government calculates that the Pilbara exported more than 326Mt of bulk commodities in 2008-09, mainly iron ore. This, it said, is forecast to reach "more than 530Mt/y by 2015 and as much as 750Mt/y by 2020".