



Port Bonython to be export nerve centre

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FOUR mining companies have joined forces to push ahead with plans to make Port Bonython in the Spencer Gulf a hub for iron ore exports.

A private sector investment of up to \$300 million will help transform the port in two years, if government land is made available to developers. Western Plains Resources, Centrex Metals IMX Resources and Iron Clad Mining formed the Port Bonython Bulk Users Group yesterday to drive the plan.

BHP Billiton is expected to choose Port Bonython as its export route from the Olympic Dam mine, but plans are a long way from fruition.

Also spurring the smaller miners was OneSteel's decision last year to block Western Plains and SA's Centrex from accessing its Whyalla port facility.

"Iron ore exporters can now speak with one voice to the government, the Whyalla com-

munity and port developers," Port Bonython Bulk Users Group chairman Bob Duffin said.

Export demand for iron ore is estimated at 8 million to 10 million tonnes per annum (mtpa) by 2010 and at 20mtpa by 2015.

"We believe this demand is sufficient to start developing the port facility," Mr Duffin said.

"Besides, even under the most ambitious plans pre-feasibility studies show they (BHP Billiton) will not export from the Olympic Dam until 2015. We will have larger tonnages and the need is more immediate."

On the fallout with OneSteel, Mr Duffin said: "To an extent, it was that issue that galvanised us to seek alternate options."

The group will work with SA Chamber of Mines and Energy and the Resources and Energy Sectors Infrastructure Council.

Spokesman for Infrastructure Minister Patrick Conlon's office, Matt Clemow, said: "We are taking expressions of interest from interested companies and are

aware of the industry's needs."

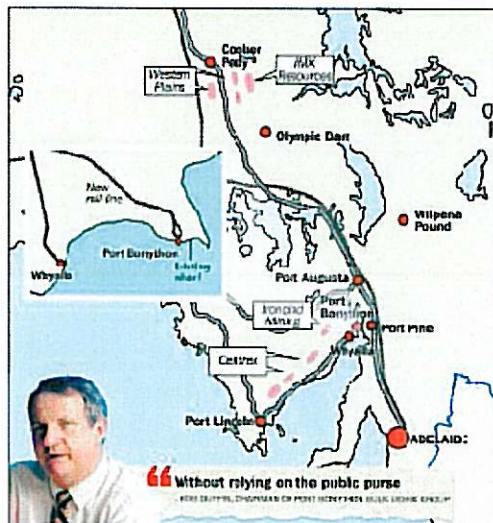
Mr Duffin said that the facility can be funded by the private sector "without relying on the public purse" "We have sufficient demand for the facility to be bankable."

The group made a presentation to RESIC last week. RESIC aims to ensure SA capitalises and moves quickly from an exploration boom to a mining boom. "Without RESIC's support, I can't think this plan can work," Mr Duffin said.

Port Bonython has the benefits of deep water access, proximity to the standard gauge railway network and existing use as industrial land. The sole jetty is used to export LPG and crude oil from the Cooper Basin.

Stuart Petroleum and Scott Group are building a \$70 million-plus refinery at the port.

The proposed facility will include a 25km railway line, iron ore storage sheds, a bottom dumper and a conveyor facility to load the ships.



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