

Rail decision could save miners money

By **REBECCA LE MAY**

ATLAS Iron and Aquila Resources say a decision to open up rail lines in Western Australia owned by the mining giants could save smaller iron miners money and underpin development of projects.

The Australian Competition Tribunal on Wednesday allowed third parties to use the Goldsworthy and Robe rail lines, which are owned by BHP Billiton and Rio Tinto respectively, in the Pilbara region of WA.

Atlas says the Goldsworthy railway could be used to transport ore from its projects, while Aquila Resources says the Robe railway, which runs to Rio's wholly owned port at Cape Lambert, could benefit Aquila's West Pilbara iron ore project.

Aquila, Fortescue Metals and Metallurgical Corporation of China have considered building their own rail line and a new port at Anketell Point so they do not have to rely on Rio granting access to its infrastructure for their Pilbara projects.

However, this may not be

necessary if smaller miners can negotiate terms of access with the mining giants, but it could still be a challenging process.

The Goldsworthy railway is close to some of Atlas' main iron ore deposits including its first mine, Pardoo, about 100 kilometres from Port Hedland.

The Goldsworthy line runs directly to Port Hedland and is adjacent to existing and planned multi-user port infrastructure at Utah Point.

AAP



Third parties can now use BHP's rail lines following a court ruling