ANKETELL GETS GREEN LIGHT

BY ROB MCGLYNN

Pilbara's newest deepwater port and industrial precinct has been approved by the Western Australian State Government.

The new port will have an initial export capacity of 350 million tonnes per annual and an industrial area of more than 1,400 hectares. A corridor for transport and services would also be developed to accommodate a range of users and different mineral commodities.

To be built at Anketell Point, 30 kilometres east of Karratha, the port will be a partnership agreement between the State Government, an infrastructure provider and three 'foundation partners': Fortescue Metals Group, China Metallurgical Group and West Pilbara Iron Ore Project, 50% owned by WA minerals explorer Aquila Resources.

The partners have submitted a conceptual plan to the State Government, outlining the facilities required, and how the proposed development can accommodate other potential users, as well as providing areas for industrial development.

Construction is expected to start next year, with the first ships loading by late 2013.

Aquila General Manager of Iron Ore Russell Tipper said he expects the port to have a multiplier effect for the Pilbara economy. "There'll be plenty of opportunity for small business to provide services to the project," he said.

"It will have a huge effect, especially when you consider there are a number of miners up there that are 'stranded' without access to infrastructure, and they'll now be gearing up to cash in on their resource."

WA Chamber of Commerce and industry Chief Economist John Nicolaou said the new port presented a host of opportunities for local contractors and service providers via the Chamber's Industry Capability Network (ICN), which it runs on behalf of the State Government.

"The ICN is the perfect conduit for local contractors, giving them full, fair and reasonable access into the bidding process," he said. "Then it's up to them to ensure they're competitive."

"It's important, especially as the State gears up for the next boom, that local business and industry have confidence in procurement processes for major projects, and understand how they can be involved," he said.

The Chamber hopes this will translate into new business for locally-based companies and jobs for more Western Australians."

To find out more about the ICN log on to www.icnwa.org.au or phone on (08) 9365 7623.