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Western Australia to build new deep-water iron-ore port

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PERTH (miningweekly.com) – Western Australia would build a new deep-water port at Anketell to boost iron-ore exports from the Pilbara region, Premier **Colin Barnett** announced on Thursday.

The multi-user deep-water port and industrial precinct would complement the Hedland and Dampier ports, also in Pilbara.

Barnett said the government would spend A\$3,5-million during the next three years to plan and prepare an industrial precinct development agreement for the project including commercial, legal and engineering advice to negotiate the agreement.

The precinct, which would ultimately include a port with more than a 350-million ton a year export capacity, an industrial area of more than 1 400 ha and a corridor for transport and services, would be developed to accommodate a range of users and different mineral commodities.

The port would have a cap placed on it in future to ensure the viability of existing ports.

Private investors will build the multi-user port under an agreement with the state government.

Three significant iron-ore projects are potential foundation investors in the new precinct, namely API Management's 30-million to 40-million ton a year West Pilbara project, Fortescue Metals' 30-million to 60-million tons a year Solomon project, and China Metallurgical Group Corporation's 15-million tons a year Cape Lambert iron-ore project.

"The government will work with these companies, or an infrastructure provider to develop the project, with plans to commence operations by 2015," the Premier said.

Barnett noted that the strength of Western Australia's iron-ore exports and the growth plans of its current users were testing the capacity of the existing Pilbara ports.

In 2008/9, the Pilbara exported more than 326-million tons of bulk commodities, mainly iron-ore. This is forecast to reach more than 530-million tons a year by 2015 and as much as 750-million tons a year by 2020.

"The Anketell port and industrial precinct will provide opportunities for new exports and processing of iron-ore and other minerals."

The Department of State Development would lead negotiations on behalf of the government, Dampier Port Authority would manage the new port and infrastructure corridors and LandCorp would develop the industrial precinct.

"Anketell was first identified as a potential iron-ore port in the 1970s, Barnett noted.

Existing towns would service the port, especially the nearby Karratha, providing further business and development opportunities for other Pilbara communities.