

Berth opening to increase exports

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Iron ore exports from Geraldton Port will be able to almost double with the opening of the \$49 million upgrade of Berth 5 today.

Planning and Infrastructure Minister Alannah MacTiernan said the berth 10 million tonnes per annum capacity was almost double the whole port's 6.44 million tonnes of exports, including 3.5 million tonnes per annum of iron ore, in 2006-07.

"This new facility will give local iron ore producers confidence that they can continue to expand their operations until industry is ready to take the next step and invest in a major new deep water port at Oakajee capable of handling larger vessels," she said.

The facilities at Geraldton Port will continue to serve the needs of the mining companies in the Mid-West and complement the port at Oakajee in the future.

Moving iron ore from Berth 4 has freed significant capacity to serve other exporters. Last year, the port handled mineral sands, talc, copper and zinc concentrate and garnet totalling more than one million tonnes.

"Also, iron ore can now be loaded over Berth 5 simultaneously with mineral sands over Berth 4, a major improvement to the port's efficiency," Ms MacTiernan said.

"This project was an important part of the State Government's \$103m investment in deepening Geraldton's harbour and \$91.4m investment in building stage one of the Southern Transport Corridor to support export industries and strengthen the region's future."

Geraldton MLA Shane Hill said he was pleased the port had paid close attention to the need to protect city residents, port workers and the local environment from iron ore dust.

"These new facilities meet the highest engineering standards and are designed to minimise dust escaping at all transfer points throughout the conveyor circuit and shiploader," Mr Hill said.

"Geraldton can look forward to continued growth as an export port, without threatening its attraction as a place to live in and visit."