



Iron ore industry set to boost the region

Geraldton Iron Alliance independent chairman Clive Brown says the iron ore industry has the potential to boost state income and open the way for other developing industries.

Mr Brown says there are strong policy grounds for government to support the development of the industry in the Mid West.

“The industry has the potential to provide a sound economy and employment for 25 to 40 years based on our current knowledge of the resources available and based on current market demand,” he says.

Mr Brown says the industry has the potential to be a large-scale one but will depend on the development of infrastructure to support it.

“The capacity of the industry will be limited if it does not get access to the resource,” he says.

Quoting a report by Economic Consulting Services, Mr Brown says development of the industry will provide 1360 jobs during construction and 4254 jobs during the suggested operational stage of 25 years.

Construction expenditure of \$5.5 billion is expected to generate a further \$13 billion expenditure elsewhere in the state.

Mr Brown says the infrastructure will provide a lasting benefit for the region, noting that most upgrades



Clive Brown

are funded by the companies that own the infrastructure.

He says Oakajee Port has the capacity to attract other industries to the region and development of the rail lines to the port will open up possibilities for other mining operations, not necessarily in iron ore.

Mr Brown says the City of Geraldton and the Mid West are permanent communities, with a varied economic base and sound community infrastructure.

“They are places where people like

to live – not too distant from Perth and with a moderate climate.”

He says the towns are ideal for mining companies wanting to use a local workforce that directly supports the economy of the region and is not dependent on fly-in fly-out commuting.

The industry can also provide opportunities for indigenous Australians to access good jobs and business opportunities.

“The further development of the Mid West provides an opportunity for it to be the most significant regional centre in Western Australia,” Mr Brown says.

While parts of the region have been degraded in the past, current investigations show that less than 1 per cent of banded iron stone formations would be impacted by iron ore mining.

Mr Brown says the industry will work with environment agencies to provide a positive environmental outcome and has already sponsored a Regional Conservation Association.

But it is critical the industry secures four key infrastructure projects to move forward – water, a 330kV powerline from Perth, the Southern Transport Corridor and Oakajee Port.

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“The mines require access to water. The alliance would like to see the government agencies expedite their plans to assess the underdeveloped water resources in the region and then ensure they allocate the water rights the industry needs for its sustainable development.”

While congratulating the State Government on allocating \$280 million for the powerline to Geraldton, Mr Brown calls on it to ensure administrative and technical resources are provided without delay.

He also stresses the importance of the Southern Transport Corridor to key iron ore projects in the region and says planning for its use should be done early.

It is also urgent to allocate the port development contract, so work can get under way.

The timeline for the RFP was 31 July and this had been extended Planning and Infrastructure Minister Alannah MacTiernan from June 30.

“It is a crucial decision – therefore it is important the government gets it right,” Mr Brown says. ■