



OPR wins Oakajee port bid

NO TURNING BACK NOW

JO CAMPBELL

THE MID WEST'S destiny as a major iron ore player is a crucial step nearer after yesterday's landmark announcement that Oakajee Port and Rail will build the deepwater port at Oakajee.

Premier Alan Carpenter announced OPR as the preferred developer of the port after a special Cabinet meeting in Geraldton.

The decision has been called a critical step forward for the region, but Planning and Infrastructure Minister Alannah MacTiernan warned there

was work to be done before the final go-ahead.

A thousand people will be employed to build the Port.

It will cost up to \$2 billion and have an export capacity of about 35 million tonnes of iron ore a year.

It will include berths for use by commercial clients as well as common-use infrastructure such as a channel, turning basins and breakwaters.

Government will retain ownership of the port, while Geraldton Port Authority will manage it.

Geraldton Iron Ore Alliance chairman Clive Brown said the

timely development of the port would cement the successful future of the Mid West iron ore industry, but he warned miners needed it to be built as soon as possible.

"The allocation of the right to negotiate a port development agreement with the Government is only the first step in a process that involves



Historic moment: Planning and Infrastructure Minister Alannah MacTiernan, Premier Alan Carpenter and Geraldton MLA Shane Hill announce the preferred developer of a deepwater port at Oakajee. Picture: GARY WARNER



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New dawn as minister clears the way for port



Cabinet address: Geraldton MLA Shane Hill has the attention of Premier Alan Carpenter and State Cabinet as they meet in the City of Geraldton-Greenough chambers yesterday. Picture: GARY WARNER

a lot of work and consultation that needs to be done before construction gets underway," he said.

"Delays in constructing the port could lead to delays in the development of some of the alliance members' projects."

But Ms MacTiernan said the completion of the project would now be out of Government's

hands and rely on mining companies' ability to prove reserves.

"Financing of both proposals was conditional on confirmation of project feasibility — so there is some way to go before there is a clear green light for the project," she said.

"The mining companies that would be the foundation customers for the project still need to prove up their resources and agree

to take or pay, or similar arrangements sufficient to underpin the investment in port and transport infrastructure.

"But clearly, selection of a preferred respondent is another important step towards realisation of the dream for a deepwater port in the Mid West."

The Premier said that after technical assessment OPR's proposal had come up as the defini-

tive favourite over competitor Yilgarn Infrastructure.

"Both proposals had merit, but technical assessment of the two proposals resulted in a very definitive recommendation in favour of Oakajee Port and Rail,"

he said.

"Its proposal was judged to be more developed and robust than that of its competitor, and to present the State with the best oppor-

tunity to develop a world-class port. The next step in the process will see Government work on a development plan with OPR to create a legal document about its implementation, expected to be completed by the end of the year."

Yilgarn refused to admit complete defeat saying there would still be work for the company, which was devised solely to design a bid for the port.



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**Another important
step towards
realisation of the
dream**
— PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE
MINISTER ALANNAH MacTIERNAN