

## **Ravensthorpe Nickel Project**

The Esperance Port will undergo another multi-million dollar expansion as a result of BHP Billiton's decision to proceed with the \$A2 billion Ravensthorpe nickel project.

A nickel mine and processing plant is being developed 35 kilometres east of Ravensthorpe near the South Coast Highway, and the plant is expected to be operational by the end of 2006.

The project involves exporting 220 000 tonnes of nickel hydroxide annually through the Port, and importing 500 000 tonnes of bulk prilled sulphur a year from Vancouver, Canada.

A further 40 000 tonnes of magnesium will also be imported annually in containers. Along with the sulphur, the magnesium is used in the processing of laterite nickel.

The nickel hydroxide will be shipped to the Yabulu nickel refinery near Townsville in Queensland.

Prilled sulphur will be unloaded into purpose-built wharf hoppers at the Port, and stored in a 120 000 tonne purpose-built, enclosed shed.

The storage and handling of the prilled sulphur will use conveyors and sheds similar to existing facilities at the Port.

The new sulphur storage shed is part of a \$30 million upgrade which will include installing a multi-purpose shore-based crane capable of loading and unloading containers as well as the bulk prilled sulphur.

About 12 ships a year will dock at Esperance to collect containers of nickel hydroxide and a similar number is expected to discharge sulphur.

Purpose build trucks that enable the containers carrying the nickel hydroxide to be transported to Esperance and the sulphur to be freighted to the mine site are being built.

BHP Billiton's project will result in 26 truck movements (52 round trips) between the Port and the mine site daily, a six percent increase in daily traffic movements on the South Coast Highway.

Between 10 and 15 people will be employed at the Port to handle the increased shipping movements, bringing to nearly 90 people employed directly at the Port.