



# Call for 'modest' expansion



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A "MODEST" expansion of the Esperance port of 10-15 million tonnes per annum and incremental rail upgrades are the best ways to get more iron ore exported through the port in the short-term, according to a study commissioned by the Yilgarn Iron Producers Association.

The *Kalgoorlie Miner* understands an upgrade, costing about \$225m, would be sufficient to begin the process of "unlocking the riches of the Yilgarn iron province".

According to industry sources, the upgrade could include a new twin car dumper, conveyors, shed and upgraded loader paid for by the successful proponent of the multi-user facility, with costs recouped from miners through shipping fees.

YIPA chairman Jonathan Lea said the supply chain study provided significant further information on how the iron ore exporters could maximise the use of the rail network for the benefit of all involved.

He said it also provided an indication of the track improvements required to achieve the likely expected capacity increase in the near future.

"This assists greatly in the overall understanding in the key infrastructure planning aspect of project development," Mr Lea said.

Mindax chief executive Steve Ward said the company had a "world-class resource" with its Mount Forrest project, and shipments from Esperance were a key part of the project.

"A practical and cost-effective logistics solution optimising existing facilities is needed to unlock the substantial resources in the Yilgarn," Dr Ward said.

According to a statement released by YIPA to the Australian Stock Exchange last week, the implications of the "breakthrough study" indicated a "low capital and incremental upgrading of infrastructure can be used to cater for the stage one export

of DSO (direct shipping ore) material through Esperance".

"A modestly priced Esperance Port upgrade (stage one) of 10 – 15Mtpa capacity is the way forward along with incremental rail upgrades," the statement said.

"A stage two upgrade, with the construction of a second berth, could boost the total port potential above 50Mtpa and this could be reached over time through a number of environmentally sound sequential expansions." It said the study was the first time miners in WA had co-operated closely to facilitate infrastructure upgrades.

The statement said preliminary results of the study had been shared with Esperance Ports Sea and Land.

But a spokesman for EPSL said while it had been briefed on the study, the authority had not yet seen the document in its entirety and was unable to comment until then.



**Upgrade suggested: The Esperance Port.** Photo: TIM SLATER