

New Pilbara port by '09

By Tristan Lavalette

CHINESE mining giant Citic Pacific has ambitious plans to build a port and WA's largest desalination plant in the Pilbara by 2009.

Citic Pacific, China's largest specialty steel manufacturer, is proposing a \$5.2bn iron ore project in Cape Preston – 100km south-west of Karratha.

The project involves construction of processing and support infrastructure including a magnetite concentrator, desalination plant, port facilities, a power station and an accommodation village.

It would be the largest magnetite project in Australia and the first iron ore mine in the country to include large scale downstream processing.

With the demand for labour a critical issue across the booming Pilbara, the project is expected to require 2500 workers during the construction phase and 600 work-

ers during operations.

CCI WA chief executive John Langoulant believed the project would add to the growing pressures on the severe labour shortage in the region.

"The project will put pressure on the availability of labour and increase the burden that is concentrated in Karratha," he said.

"We believe in the next ten years 400,000 skilled-workers will be needed in Karratha and that will mean things will have to change ...such as allowing a broader range of visas made available to attract workers."

Greens candidate at the Federal Election Robin Chapple said he was worried about the sustainability of the workforce in the Pilbara.

"I have no problem with the essence of development but there are issues with housing and permanent workforce in the Pilbara," he said.

"There is an immense strain in the region and recruiting people

from overseas will continue to add problems to a sustainable workforce."

Citic Pacific Mining CEO Barry Fitzgerald said the project would have immense benefits for Australia.

"China is a world leader in magnetite mining and the Chinese-Australian collaboration on this project will enable the transfer of expertise and technology in magnetite mining and processing to Australia," he said.

"As well as developing new skills in magnetite mining, downstream processing adds more than double the value to the Australian economy of traditional iron ore projects. That means more jobs and more money staying here in Australia."

Citic Pacific expects the project to boost the Australian economy by an estimated \$75bn over the next 25 years.



Citic Pacific may soon commence works 100km west of Karratha.