Two new coal terminals for Port of Abbot Point

North Queensland Bulk Ports Corporation [NQBP] has announced the awarding of Preferred Developer status to BHP Billiton and Hancock Coal Pty Ltd for two major expansions at the Port of Abbot Point.

NQBP chairman of the board, Leonie Taylor said, "We are pleased to announce that the Queensland Government has endorsed proposals from BHP Billiton and Hancock Coal to build two new coal terminals at Abbot Point to export an estimated 110 million tonnes of coal per annum."

"The new coal terminals will be single user terminals providing BHP Billiton with the capacity to export 30 mtpa and Hancock Coal the capacity to export 30 mtpa.

"Both BHP Billiton and Hancock Coal have expressed interest in working with NQBP in optimising the area to increase capacity from 30 mtpa to 50 mtpa for BHP Billiton and from 30 mtpa to 60 mtpa for Hancock Coal. This of course, would be subject to investigations and approvals."

"The Port of Abbot Point is situated next to the State Development Area offering enormous potential for industry growth and is a strategic port positioned to respond to industry demand", she said.

The two new terminals will be located adjacent to the existing Government-owned Abbot Point Coal Terminal, which is currently undergoing upgrades to increase capacity to 50 mtpa.

The Government intends to offer a 99-year lease over this existing Abbot Point Coal Terminal with the sale process to commence in late 2010.

The proposed BHP coal terminal will be fed by Queensland Rail's Newlands coal rail system.

The Hancock Coal proposal is a comprehensive mine to port proposal which includes a purpose-built rail line from the Galilee Coal Basin to its coal terminal at the Port of Abbot Point.

Aurecon Hatch has been engaged to undertake a study to identify the best site within the Abbot Point State Development Area for this further capacity. The study is expected to be completed by August 2010 at which time a further Expressions of Interest process may be undertaken if demand warrants.

Medupi loan agreed

After months of debate and disagreement, the World Bank has finally sanctioned a US$3B loan for the 4.8 GW Medupi coal-fired power plant in South Africa.

Environmental non-governmental organisations oppose the scheme because of the high carbon emissions produced by coal-fired power plants but the World Bank considered that the economic benefits to a developing nation outweighed the environmental costs.

Obiageli Ezekwesili, the World Bank's vice president for Africa, commented: "Without an increased energy supply, South Africans will face hardship for the poor and limited economic growth."

The project is of relevance to the coal transport sector on two counts. Firstly, part of the loan will be used to finance the construction of a new coal railway to the plant to reduce the impact of haulage on the road network. Exxaro has already agreed to supply plant operator Eskom with 14.6 mt of coal a year for the plant from its Grootegeluk mine over 40 years.

Secondly, the scheme will obviously encourage increased coal production, although it could attract output away from exports when the first turbine comes on stream in 2012.

Several governments, including the UK and US, abstained in the vote on sanctioning the loan, suggesting that it may be the last coal-fired plant of its kind to receive World Bank support.

Part of the loan will be used to fund 100 MW generating capacity each of wind and solar power, in an effort to kickstart the renewables sector in South Africa. Pretoria is now committed to promoting renewable energy projects but any genuine progress in this will probably free up more coal for export rather than reduce the scale of mining in the country.

New alliance for dry-bulk handling

BulkLogisticLandmark was involved in the upgrade of the Toros Ceyhan terminal

Logmarin Advisors have joined forces with Bedeschi and Liebherr to form a new strategic business alliance.

BulkLogisticLandmark pools the skills and expertise of the three companies, providing a one-stop shop offering a range of dependable, integrated, cost effective solutions for both onshore and offshore terminals, it says.

It has already been involved with two projects. On shore, it was involved in the upgrading of the Toros Ceyhan terminal, located in the Bay of Iskenderun,Turkey, providing two new travelling cranes, hoppers and conveyor system. The new unloading facility enables the terminal to unload coal and other dry bulk materials from post-panamax vessels at an average rate exceeding 25,000t/day.

Off shore, the floating terminal PRINCESSE CHLOE, currently under construction at Keppel Subic Shipyard, is the latest floating facility designed by Logmarin/Interprogetti, with Liebherr cranes and Bedeschi conveyor system hoppers and shiploader. It is able to load over 800,000t/month of coal.

It is scheduled to start operation next December, at an average rate in excess of 40,000t/day.

More Oz coal for China

Australian junior coal explorer MetroCoal has secured an Aus$30M joint venture deal with China National Coal Group Corp, under which subsidiary China Coal Import & Export Company has acquired a 51% interest in MetroCoal's EPC 1165 Columboola coal exploration permit in Queensland's Surat Basin.

MetroCoal will use the funds to explore and evaluate the potential for future commercialisation options within the permit, seen as a potential future thermal coal supply base. The joint venture said the deal opened opportunities for further cooperation on MetroCoal's other permits.

MetroCoal chief executive Mike O'Brien said CCIEC was a substantial company, producing more than 100 mtpa of coal and would bring to the joint venture technical expertise, particularly in underground coal mining.

MetroCoal's overall exploration target is between 2.5 bt and 3.5 bt of coal.

Another Australian export coal proposal has moved nearer to fruition with the delivery of a pre-feasibility study for Queensland's Belvedere hard coking coal project.

Belvedere, in central Queensland's Bowen Basin, is owned 51% by Vale with partners Aquila Resources and ACMI. Aquila said the PFS confirmed the technical feasibility of underground longwall mining of the deposit, which has an indicated resource of 1,002 mt and an inferred resource of 1,473 mt. Capital expenditure is estimated at Aus$2.8B, with operating costs of approximately Aus$71/t FOB, excluding royalties.

Aquila expects Belvedere to produce an initial 3.5 mtpa and then up to 7 mtpa, which will be transported via Queensland Rail's Moura system to the port of Gladstone. The project is a member of the WICET consortium which is the preferred proponent for the management of the 70 mtpa-capacity Wiggins Island Coal Terminal.