

Maiden bauxite shipment from Weipa's Hey Point a step forward for Metallica Minerals

ABC Rural By Charlie McKillop

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PHOTO: Bauxite is loaded through the Hey Point barge loading facility at Weipa. (Supplied: Metallica Minerals Ltd)

A successful shipment of bauxite using a barge loading facility at Weipa has been a cause of excitement in the far north Queensland mining town.

MAP: Weipa 4874 

Green Coast Resources (GCR) is the first company not aligned with Rio Tinto or Comalco to export bauxite from Cape York Peninsula for more than 50 years.

GCR purchased a tenement several years ago from Cape Alumina Limited, and gained approval to extract and export bauxite from the new mine.

But its maiden shipment also was seen as a major step forward for developmental company Metallica Minerals, which provided working capital for the first shipment.

According to its statement to the Australian Stock Exchange, Metallica Minerals provided a short-term loan to GCR and in return, will receive transshipping services when production from its nearby Urquhart project starts next year.

Metallica Minerals chief executive Simon Slesarewich said Urquhart had the potential to export 1.6 million tonnes of bauxite annually.

He said the successful transshipping operation, from a self-propelled barge into ocean-going export vessels, had vindicated the company's decision to use the existing Hey Point facility as a low-capital cost logistics option.

"I have no doubt that all the locals up there in their tinnies and their boats would have gone to have a look at the transshipping because it's something they haven't seen before," Mr Slesarewich said.

"But I think very soon it'll just become very run-of-the-mill, and those guys are over there mining bauxite and shipping it, just like Rio do.

"Obviously we won't be anywhere near the same volumes, but it offers new opportunities for smaller contractors and suppliers and just another boost for the local economy."

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AUDIO: Metallica Minerals chief executive Simon Slesarewich says it is an exciting time for new bauxite miners in Cape York (ABC Rural)

Bauxite has been mined at Weipa on western Cape York Peninsula in Queensland since 1963 by Rio Tinto (and formerly Comalco).

The mine produces 26 million tonnes of bauxite annually.

Mr Slesarewich said two new bauxite operations in Weipa would complement, not compete with, the mining giant.

"We're running our own race and looking to build a sustainable bauxite mine and business off the back of that," he said.

Topics: mining-rural, mining-industry, weipa-4874

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