

# Media statement

## Surat Basin Rail Joint Venture

3 August 2007

### WORK BEGINS ON MAJOR RAIL PROJECT IN SURAT COAL BASIN

Planning is now underway for a rail link through the Surat Coal Basin from Toowoomba and Gladstone. This follows the awarding of an unconditional Exclusive Mandate by the Queensland Government on 12 July 2007 to a joint venture comprising Australian Transport and Energy Corridor Pty Ltd (ATEC); Industry Funds Management; Anglo Coal; Xstrata Coal and Queensland Rail (QR).

Chairman of the Surat Basin Rail Joint Venture, Everaldo Compton, announced today that a technical consortium consisting of Connell Hatch, Parsons Brinkerhoff and Maunsell Aecom had been awarded a \$7 million contract to provide engineering and environmental services for the project.

Work will begin immediately by investigating a route for the missing link between Wandoan and Banana and QR will commence scoping the work required for the upgrading of the existing rail lines between Toowoomba and Wandoan and from Banana to the Port of Gladstone.

“The Surat Basin Railway is a project of immense national significance,” Compton said.

“Its development will greatly benefit regional Queensland and enhance the continued growth of Australia’s largest export industry, coal.

“The coal-rich Surat Basin, which contains in excess of four billion tonnes of thermal coal, has largely not been mined due to a lack of access to a suitable port. An efficient rail freight line will allow coal to be transported from the basin to the Port of Gladstone for domestic and export sales. It is estimated that a minimum of twenty million tonnes, potentially increasing up to over forty million, of coal will be sent to Queensland ports every year from coal mines that will become operational over the next decade.

“Once constructed, this open-access, multi-user railway has the potential to benefit other rural industries in the region.

“The first step in developing the missing link will be to identify a preliminary route that will then be subject to more detailed investigation as part of preparing an Environmental Impact Statement. From this a final route selection will be made, following state government approval, which is environmentally responsible and cost effective.”

Everald Compton said that the communities that will benefit from the project’s development will be involved from an early stage, so that they can have input in route selection and environmental issues.

He praised the initiative of Premier Peter Beattie, Deputy Premier Anna Bligh and Minister for Transport and Main Roads Paul Lucas in making the project possible. He said the joint venture would work in close partnership with the Queensland Government through the Coordinator General during the planning process.

Deputy Prime Minister, Mark Vaile, announced recently that the Federal Government will commit \$3.5 million to the Joint Venture so that the planning can be based on constructing a dual gauge line. This initiative has been endorsed by the Shadow Minister for Transport, Martin Ferguson.

“The Surat Basin Rail Joint Venture is a splendid example of how the private sector and governments can work together to plan for the delivery of major infrastructure” Compton said.

“The joint venture is endeavoring to build the railway as soon as 2012.”

## **Ends**

### **Media enquiries:**

EVERALD COMPTON	0407 721 710.
KYMBERLEY MCMAHON	PH: 07 3831 4774 OR 0434 528 405
RACHEL BYRNES	PH: 07 3831 4774 OR 0411 021 018