

## GENERAL NEWS

# Iron ore giant releases massive Pilbara plans

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MINING powerhouse Rio Tinto has released detailed plans for a massive new \$3.5 billion iron ore project, seeking public comment for what would be one of the Pilbara's biggest mining developments.

Lying 110km northwest of Newman, Rio's Koodaideri project would export up to 35 million tonnes of iron ore per annum across a 30-year mine life.

A planned site ramp-up by 2030 would see this initial figure increase to 70mtpa.

Impacting the multibillion-dollar price tag, Rio's plans emphasised the need for a new 165km rail system linking the site to its existing Tom Price-Dampier line.



A conceptual layout of the Koodaideri mine and plant area

New roads, power supplies, water infrastructure and accommodation facilities would also need to be arranged, with estimated workforce figures

totalling 2000 employees for the project construction and 700 employees across the operational mine life.

With the release of its plans, Rio also

opened a compulsory forum for public comment.

As the proposed project would be less than 23km from Karijini National Park – an area famed for its rare Australian flora and fauna, including the northern quoll, lead-nosed bat and Pilbara olive python – some environmentalists raised concerns regarding the damage Koodaideri could inflict on the environmentally sensitive area.

The plans are open to the public for a six-week consultation period, before the Environmental Protection Authority makes its recommendation to WA Environment minister Albert Jacob.

Should Rio gain environmental approval and choose to go ahead with the project, Koodaideri construction would begin in the latter half of 2014, with the mine entering production in 2016.