

‘The benefit of this project to the state’s economy is enormous’

Jilalan project means revenue and jobs

By **OWEN JACQUES**
owen.jacques@dailymercury.com.au

RAIL workers south of Mackay had a visit from Premier Anna Bligh and Treasurer Andrew Fraser yesterday as part of their regional Queensland tour.

The pair toured the Jilalan Rail Yard, near Sarina, which is being expanded as part of a \$500 million plan by the State Government.

It is expected to create up to 1600 jobs including positions in the construction, suppliers and manufacturing industries.

Ms Bligh said the \$500 million upgrade, would bring benefits to the Gooenyella coal-rail system, which services 21 mines in the region.

“The benefit of this upgraded project to the state’s economy is enormous – not

only will it allow the generation of up to \$3 billion in additional revenue annually for the Central Queensland coal industry, it will be on the back of new jobs at mines and in regional communities supporting this growth.”

Under the plan to sell off Queensland Rail’s coal system assets, the rail yard would also attract a price tag.

Member for Mirani Ted Malone slammed the Premier saying that rail workers could not trust her assurances of job security when the rail yard and Abbot Point were sold.

“On the one hand she wants the best price for state-owned assets and at the same time expects workers to believe their jobs will be safe,” Mr Malone said.

“How on earth can you

sell a business and expect the best price by telling prospective buyers they’ll have to keep all existing staff? Business doesn’t work like that.”

When Ms Bligh met with criticism from rail workers she tried to assure them their jobs would be safe but was shouted down by protestors.

The Premier defended her position, saying projects

like the Jilalan upgrade created jobs in construction and “laid the foundations for thousands of jobs”.

“This upgrade will increase Jilalan’s peak capacity by around a third – that means we will see an average of 40 trains each day carrying up to 130 million tonnes of coal per annum from approximately 30 trains carrying around 100 million tonnes.”



Inspecting the progress of the \$500 million Jilalan Rail Yard upgrade south of Mackay are, from left, QR Network executive general manager Mike Carter, State Treasurer Andrew Fraser and Premier Anna Bligh.

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