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OZ Minerals ships from Gupta's Whyalla port

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SHIPSHAPE: A secure container of copper concentrate from OZ Minerals' Carrapateena mine is lifted into a vessel at SIMEC Mining's Whyalla Port.

COPPER concentrate produced at Oz Minerals' Carrapateena mine will be shipped from the Whyalla port following a deal with Sanjeev Gupta's SIMEC Mining.

The three-year agreement follows a competitive tender process, and becomes the first major contract SIMEC has signed with a third party for access to export from the port.

Copper concentrate will be trucked from the Carrapateena mine, around 235km north of Whyalla, to the port, and then shipped out in 5000-to-10,000 tonne cargoes.

SIMEC Mining executive managing director Matt Reed said the agreement followed a number of third-party trials in recent years, including for wind farm transportation and ship deconstruction, scrapping and recycling. "We've stated for some time that our port is open business, and the last few years have demonstrated that, through the number and variety of trials we've undertaken," he said. "To take that to the next level and secure an ongoing contract is testament to our increased capability - and an exciting step in the evolution of the Whyalla port."

In December, OZ Minerals produced its first copper concentrate at Carrapateena, which has a mine life of at least 20 years.

Around 20,000 to 25,000 tonnes of copper, and 35,000 to 40,000 ounces of gold, are expected to be produced this calendar year, with annual shipments from Whyalla expected to increase as production ramps up.

OZ Minerals' chief financial officer Warrick Ranson said access to the port enabled the company to reduce transport times. "We are impressed with the capability SIMEC has managed to develop through the facility in recent years, and look forward to partnering with them to deliver our product to market," he said.

The Whyalla port is owned and operated by SIMEC, servicing its South Australian hematite and magnetite iron ore mines as well as Liberty steelmaking facilities in Whyalla.

Mr Reed was hopeful the three-year contract with OZ Minerals would be extended to accommodate the overall life of the mine. "This contract justifies our investment in the port, particularly the installation of our state of the art mobile harbour crane, as this wouldn't have been possible with our old facilities," he said. "We will be able to transport this material safely, efficiently and with a high standard of environmental care, and expect our performance to lead to further long term contracts in the near future."