

# Partners toast first shipment of lithium

| Josh Chiat

Tawana Resources and Alliance Mineral Assets Limited have toasted the first shipment from the Bald Hill lithium and tantalum mine near Widgiemooltha.

The Astra N vessel was loaded with about 3250 metric tonnes of lithium concentrate at Esperance port this week, with the ship destined for the port of Zhenjiang in China.

A second, larger shipment of Bald Hill spodumene is expected to leave later this month.

It marks Tawana and AMAL's transition to becoming WA's newest lithium exporter, just weeks after they announced the start of production at Bald Hill, which is expected to ramp up to a run rate of about 220,000 tonnes per annum of lithium production by the end of this year.

Pilbara Minerals and Altura Minerals are expected to be the next cabs off the rank with their big Pilgangoora mines in WA's north-west later this year.

However, Kidman Resources and Sociedad Quimica y Minera de Chile look set to bypass the spodumene export route at the Mt Holland development south of Southern Cross, identifying Kwi-



**Astra N docked at Esperance port this week.** Picture: Jaimen Hudson

nana yesterday as the proposed site for a new 40,000-tonne-a-year lithium refinery.

Product from Bald Hill will be sold into a five-year offtake deal with Burwill Holdings, a Hong Kong-listed company that was an early backer of Andrew Forrest in his attempts to sell Fortescue Metals Group's iron ore into the

Chinese steel market. Prices for the first two years' production from Bald Hill have been set at \$US880 a tonne for a 6 per cent grade product, with the final three years of the contract from 2020 onwards to be renegotiated based on prevailing market prices.

Tawana shares were even at 43.5¢ yesterday.