



White Paper

Coal Loading Facilities in the Port of Newcastle

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The Newcastle Export Coal Trade has developed over the last 180 years such that there are more than 37 discrete seams of coal with a requirement for blending at the port area. This and the linking together of two export facilities has created a unique operating environment which has resulted in the development of some unusual methods of integrating the various port operations.

Coal was first discovered in Newcastle in 1797 and in 1799 a vessel named 'The Hunter' took a shipment of coal gathered from the foot of cliffs to Bengal via Sydney. The first direct overseas shipment from Newcastle was in a vessel named the "Anna Josepha" to the Cape of Good Hope in 1802.

A penal settlement was established at Newcastle in 1804 and convict labour worked the coal seams and loaded the vessels. In 1831 a short wharf and a loading chute 13 ft above high water mark were erected for the Australian Agricultural Company.

Following the discovery of gold in California in 1847 and the tremendous influx of population which it engendered, there was a ready market for coal on the west coast of the United States. The development of this trade heavily taxed the port's rather elementary loading facilities. All of the vessels engaged in this trade were larger and of deeper draft than vessels used previously and it became necessary to moor these larger vessels in the stream and load them from lighters and small

vessels.

A period of development ensued and by 1890 the Port of Newcastle had steam and hydraulic cranes and two loading staiths for coal loading.

In 1886 further outcroppings of coal were discovered west of Newcastle and development of the industry began moving inland up the Hunter River Valley.