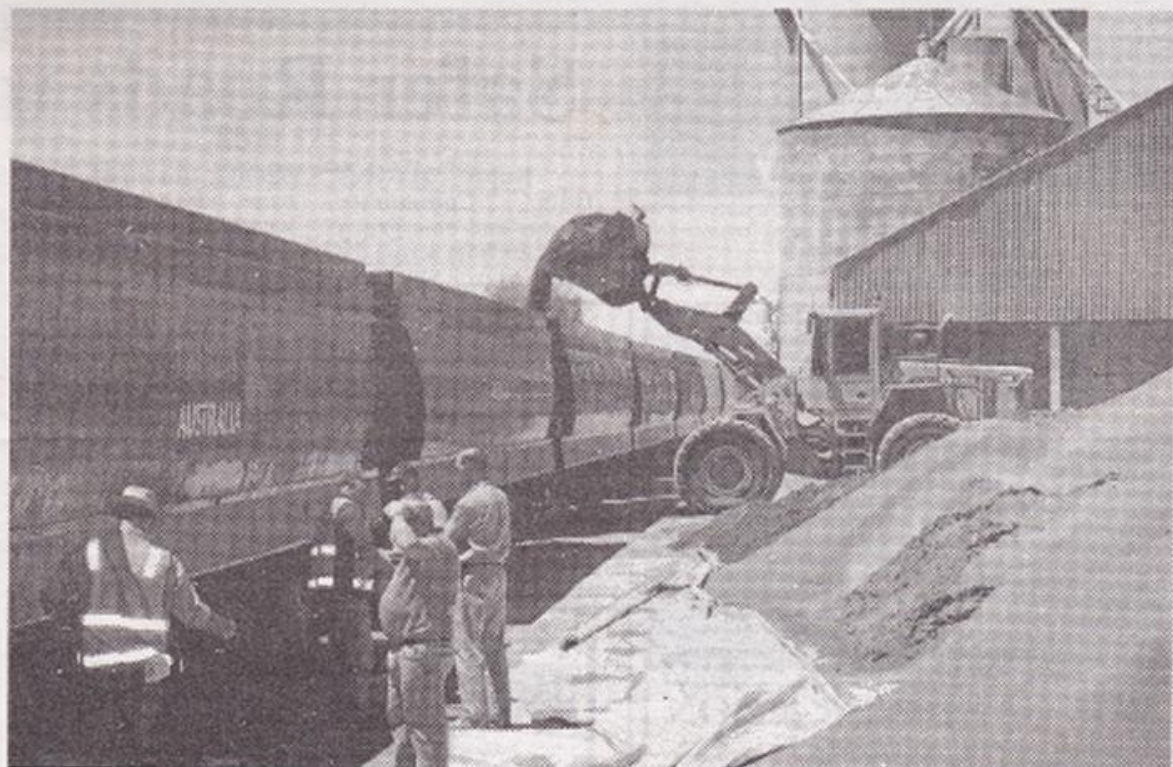


Shifting Sands



ALL HANDS ON DECK: The first loading procedure in the pilot run for moving the heavy mineral sands

A trial project involving the movement of over 1,000 tonne of Mineral Sands by rail to Portland took place in Hopetoun last week.

The train moved the equivalent of 21 truck loads and will be considered as an ongoing prospect after successful completion and analysis of the trial run.

Fundamental to the success of the project was the local support from the Hopetoun business community.

Freight Australia greatly appreciates the help from Ross Cook, Ross Brown and Tim Hallam, the local council and Graincorp.

The main aim of the trial was to demonstrate the ability of this method of transport in achieving a more cost effective method of transporting the product whilst also showing that quality issues were still able to be addressed.

We have learnt a lot from this exercise including: the tremendous competence and attitude of local business



BUCKETS FULL: Loading made easy with the assistance of Browns heavy loader

and how they can make things work with a minimum of fuss;

More about the characteristics of moving mineral sands and the procedures to load and unload efficiently;

Information to plan how an ongoing task can be done with optimal competitiveness.

The rising Australian dollar and consolidation of key

players in the Mineral Sands market means it is hard to know where this exercise may lead us.

It is now apparent that the option of rail from Hopetoun to Portland offers the best solution for the surrounding region to develop business plans. Further, the upgrade of this line, for costs estimated at one tenth of those previously allocat-

ed to standardise lines reaching Portland, would be a very wise decision for social, environmental and economic reasons.

The mineral sands trial project gave only a glimpse of what can be done by working with local regional businesses. The application can be applied to other commodities including Gypsum, Fertiliser and Grain.