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Coal bounces back to pre-flood, financial crisis highs

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**Peter Holt**

AFTER a tough few years at the coalface, the amount of the black gold passing through Queensland's ports is back to pre-flood and financial crisis levels.

More than 16.25 million tonnes of coal moved through the state's five bulk commodity ports last month - the highest July total ever recorded.

Transport Minister Scott Emerson said the 2012-13 fiscal year saw the second-highest export levels of coking a thermal coal in the state's history.

During the financial year, a total 180 million tonnes of coking and thermal coal were exported compared to 183 million tonnes in 2009-10.

"That trend has continued with coal volumes through our ports last month 2% higher than the previous record of 15.932 million tonnes in July 2009," Mr Emerson said.

He said the State Government had been working with coalminers since last year to remove floodwaters and repair infrastructure, helping to clear a backlog of coal stores.

The returns to higher export volumes has meant more coal on railways around the state, as a campaign for better covers on coal trains gathers momentum.

Calls for covers on coal trains came from Stop Brisbane Coal Trains spokesman John Gordon this week, after a Senate inquiry recommended physical lids for train fleets.

Mr Gordon called on Environment Minister Andrew Powell to implement the Senate recommendations, despite moves by the industry already in place for veneering of coal trains.

He said there "can be no more excuses" for not covering the trains, after the inquiry found high levels of coal dust from such trains.

But the Queensland Resources Council has defended the veneering practice, saying it already has world's best practice in place throughout the state.

It is understood Mr Powell is considering the State Government's position on covers for coal trains, but no final decision has yet been made.

Total July port coal output

- Abbot Point - 1.92mt, up 79.5% on July 2012
 - Dalrymple Bay - 5.14mt, up 37.4% on July 2012
 - Hay Point - 2.52mt up 10.2% on July 2012
 - Gladstone - 5.75mt up 18% on July 2012
 - Brisbane - 0.94mt up 35.8% on July 2012
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