

BHP BILLITON LTD
Form 6-K
January 28, 2005

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

Washington, D.C. 20549

FORM 6-K

REPORT OF FOREIGN ISSUER

PURSUANT TO RULE 13a-16 OR 15d-16 OF

THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934

For the Date of

27 January 2005

BHP Billiton Limited

ABN 49 004 028 077

180 Lonsdale Street

Melbourne Victoria 3000

Australia

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant files or will file annual reports under cover of Form 20-F or Form 40-F.

Form 20-F	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Form 40-F	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Indicate by check mark whether the registrant by furnishing the information contained in this Form is also thereby furnishing the information to the Commission pursuant to Rule 12g3-2(b) under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>		No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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If "Yes" is marked, indicate below the file number assigned to the registrant in connection with Rule 12g3-2(b):

Date 27 January 2005

Number

02/05

BHP BILLITON PRODUCTION REPORT FOR THE QUARTER ENDED
31 DECEMBER 2004

BHP Billiton today released its production report for the quarter ended 31 December 2004. Unless otherwise stated, production volumes refer to BHP Billiton share.

- **Record quarterly iron ore, metallurgical coal and manganese alloy production underpinned by continuing strong customer demand.**
- **Record quarterly natural gas production of 87.4 billion cubic feet following the commissioning of North West Shelf (Australia) fourth train in September 2004.**
- **Record quarterly silver production of 12.4 million ounces reflecting the benefits of a continuing debottlenecking program at Cannington (Australia).**
- **First oil production from the newly commissioned ROD (Algeria) field.**

- Total Petroleum Products

- Total production for the December 2004 quarter was 29.4 million barrels of oil equivalent, three per cent lower than the December 2003 quarter and five per cent higher than the September 2004 quarter.

- ◆ Oil and Condensate - Production for the December 2004 quarter was 12.2 million barrels, 18 per cent lower than the 14.9 million barrels produced in the December 2003 quarter. Production was lower due to natural field decline in Bass Strait, Laminaria, Griffin (all Australia), Liverpool Bay (UK) and Typhoon/Boris (USA). Higher downtime at Bass Strait, Laminaria and Wanaea/Cossack (Australia) and the divestment in February 2004 of our producing assets in Bolivia also impacted production for the quarter. This was partly offset by new production resulting from the commissioning of ROD (Algeria) in October 2004. Production for the quarter was one per cent lower than the 12.4 million barrels produced in the September 2004 quarter due to natural field decline at Bass Strait, Typhoon/Boris and higher downtime in Bass Strait, Laminaria and Wanaea/Cossack. This was partly offset by maintenance shutdowns in the previous quarter at Liverpool Bay and Bruce (UK) and new production from ROD.
- ◆ Natural Gas - Production for the December 2004 quarter was a record 87.4 billion cubic feet, 13 per cent higher than the 77.6 billion cubic feet produced in the December 2003 quarter. This was due to higher demand for Bass Strait gas and increased production from North West Shelf LNG following the commissioning of the 4th LNG Train in September 2004. Production for the December 2004 quarter was 13 per cent higher than the 77.2 billion cubic feet produced in the September 2004 quarter

due to increased production from North West Shelf LNG with the commencement of the 4th LNG Train and the maintenance shutdowns at Liverpool Bay and Bruce in the previous quarter. This was partially offset by lower demand for Bass Strait gas due to seasonal conditions.

- **Alumina -**

Production for the December 2004 quarter of 1.0 million tonnes was in line with the December 2003 quarter. Production was four per cent higher than the September 2004 quarter reflecting improving calciner performance at Worsley (Australia) and scheduled maintenance undertaken at Alumar (Brazil) in the previous quarter.

- **Aluminium**

- Production for the December 2004 quarter was 338,000 tonnes, 10 per cent higher than the December 2003 quarter. This primarily reflects the ramp up of production from Hillside 3 (South Africa) which reached full commissioning in December 2003. December 2003 quarter production was also impacted by an electrical outage at Alumar. Production was in line with the September 2004 quarter.

- **Copper -** Production for the December 2004 quarter was 265,800 tonnes, 17 per cent higher than the December 2003 quarter. This mainly reflects restoration of full capacity and higher head grades at Escondida (Chile) and Tintaya (Peru), along with record production at Antamina (Peru) following the return to their normal mine plan after the removal of lakebed sediments. These increases were partly offset by the sale of the Group's interest in Highland Valley Copper (Canada) in January 2004. Production was seven per cent higher than the September 2004 quarter due to higher head grades at Tintaya, Antamina and Cerro Colorado and higher mill throughput at Escondida.

- **Silver -** Production for the December 2004 quarter was a record 12.4 million ounces, 24 per cent higher than the December 2003 quarter and five per cent higher than the September 2004 quarter. This mainly reflects record quarterly mill throughput at Cannington (Australia) resulting from a continuing debottlenecking program.

- **Iron Ore -** Production for the December 2004 quarter was a record 24.9 million tonnes, 15 per cent higher than the December 2003 quarter and 11 per cent higher than the September 2004 quarter. The increase reflects additional capacity following the completion of several expansion projects at Western Australian Iron Ore (Australia) and record production at Samarco (Brazil), underpinned by continuing strong customer demand. Western Australian Iron Ore shipments were a record 22.1 million tonnes in the December 2004 quarter.

- **Metallurgical Coal -** Production for the December 2004 quarter was a record 9.6 million tonnes, 14 per cent higher than the December 2003 quarter. This reflects record quarterly production at Queensland Coal (Australia) underpinned by strong customer demand and improved operating performance at Illawarra Coal (Australia). Production was four per cent higher than the September 2004 quarter. This primarily reflects higher production at Illawarra Coal following longwall changeouts at Appin and Elouera and industrial activity at Elouera in the September 2004 quarter.

- **Manganese ore -** Ore production for the December 2004 quarter was 1.4 million tonnes, 14 per cent higher than the December 2003 quarter. Production increased to meet strong customer demand in all markets, particularly China, Japan and Europe. Production was in line with the September 2004 quarter.

- **Manganese alloys -** Production for the December 2004 quarter was a record 207,000 tonnes, 13 per cent higher than the December 2003 quarter. This primarily reflects improved operating performance at Metalloys (South Africa) and increased production at TEMCO (Australia) in response to strong customer demand. Production was six per cent higher than the September 2004 quarter, reflecting improved operating performance at Metalloys.

- **Diamonds** - Production of 872,000 carats at Ekati (Canada) was 49 per cent lower than the December 2003 quarter. This decrease primarily reflects processing of lower grade ore in the December 2004 quarter after mining of a high grade zone in the Koala pipe was completed in the June 2004 quarter. Production was 12 per cent lower than the September 2004 quarter, primarily due to processing of lower grade ore in the current quarter.
- **Energy Coal** -
Production for the December 2004 quarter was 21.4 million tonnes, seven per cent higher than the December 2003 quarter. This primarily reflects lower production in the December 2003 quarter at New Mexico Coal (USA), due to a planned major outage at a customer's power plant and a longwall move at San Juan underground. Production was eight per cent lower than the September 2004 quarter, primarily due to safety interventions at Ingwe's (South Africa) Douglas mine, adverse weather conditions at Cerrejon Coal (Colombia) and the impact of an excavator fire at Hunter Valley Coal (Australia) in the previous quarter.
- **Nickel**
- Production for the December 2004 quarter was 19,700 tonnes, two per cent lower than the December 2003 quarter. This primarily reflects lower production at Yabulu (Australia) due to a planned plant wide shutdown in October 2004. Production was in line with the September 2004 quarter.
- **Ferrochrome** - Production for the December 2004 quarter was 271,000 tonnes, in line with both the December 2003 and September 2004 quarters.

Further information on BHP Billiton can be found on our Internet site: <http://www.bhpbilliton.com>

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BHP BILLITON PRODUCTION SUMMARY								
			QUARTER ENDED	HALF YEAR ENDED	% CHANGE			

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								DEC Q04	DEC Q04	YTD 04
			DEC	SEPT	DEC	DEC	DEC	vs	vs	vs
			2003	2004	2004	2004	2003	DEC Q03	SEP Q04	YTD 03
PETROLEUM										
	Crude oil & condensate	('000 bbl)	14,877	12,366	12,190	24,556	30,389	-18%	-1%	-19%
	Natural gas	(bcf)	77.57	77.19	87.35	164.54	162.76	13%	13%	1%
	LPG	('000 tonnes)	200.51	231.03	216.07	447.10	399.84	8%	-6%	12%
	Ethane	('000 tonnes)	25.25	27.75	27.20	54.95	52.57	8%	-2%	5%
	Total Petroleum Products	(million boe)	30.24	28.03	29.38	57.41	62.37	-3%	5%	-8%
ALUMINIUM										
	Alumina	('000 tonnes)	1,050	1,000	1,036	2,036	2,103	-1%	4%	-3%
	Aluminium	('000 tonnes)	308	339	338	677	590	10%	0%	15%
BASE METALS										
	Copper	('000 tonnes)	226.8	248.8	265.8	514.6	441.3	17%	7%	17%
	Lead	(tonnes)	55,211	64,910	71,509	136,419	114,575	30%	10%	19%
	Zinc	(tonnes)	45,912	23,851	20,918	44,769	95,006	-54%	-12%	-53%
	Gold	(ounces)	32,085	30,132	31,247	61,379	61,255	-3%	4%	0%
	Silver	('000 ounces)	9,980	11,769	12,353	24,121	20,576	24%	5%	17%
	Molybdenum	(tonnes)	290	323	560	883	615	93%	73%	44%
CARBON STEEL MATERIALS										
	Iron ore	('000 tonnes)	21,728	22,545	24,916	47,461	42,598	15%	11%	11%
	Metallurgical coal	('000 tonnes)	8,445	9,277	9,629	18,906	17,544	14%	4%	8%
	Manganese ores	('000 tonnes)	1,199	1,379	1,361	2,740	2,352	14%	-1%	16%
	Manganese alloys	('000 tonnes)	183	195	207	402	330	13%	6%	22%

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	Hot briquetted iron	('000 tonnes)	527	-	-	-	1,023	-100%	0%	-100%
DIAMONDS AND SPECIALTY PRODUCTS										
	Diamonds	('000 carats)	1,704	986	872	1,858	3,256	-49%	-12%	-43%
ENERGY COAL										
	Energy coal	('000 tonnes)	19,978	23,245	21,389	44,634	41,112	7%	-8%	9%
STAINLESS STEEL MATERIALS										
	Nickel	('000 tonnes)	20.0	19.6	19.7	39.3	40.6	-2%	1%	-3%
	Ferrochrome	('000 tonnes)	269	265	271	536	496	1%	2%	8%
Throughout this report figures in italics indicate that this figure has been adjusted since it was previously reported.										
BHP BILLITON ATTRIBUTABLE PRODUCTION										
			QUARTER ENDED					HALF YEAR ENDED		
		BHP Billiton	DEC	MARCH	JUNE	SEPT	DEC	DEC	DEC	
		Interest	2003	2004	2004	2004	2004	2004	2003	
PETROLEUM										
Production										
	Crude oil & condensate	(000 bbl)	14,877	14,341	13,297	12,366	12,190	24,556	30,389	
	Natural gas	(bcf)	77.57	76.47	85.11	77.19	87.35	164.54	162.76	
	LPG	('000 tonnes)	200.51	217.83	235.86	231.03	216.07	447.10	399.84	
	Ethane	('000 tonnes)	25.25	16.59	25.14	27.75	27.20	54.95	52.57	
	Total Petroleum Products	(million boe)	30.24	29.78	30.32	28.03	29.38	57.41	62.37	
ALUMINIUM										

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ALUMINA									
Production ('000 tonnes)									
	Worsley	86%	700	704	696	663	686	1,349	1,399
	Suriname	45%	230	228	233	223	222	445	457
	Alumar	36%	120	130	130	114	128	242	247
	Total		1,050	1,062	1,059	1,000	1,036	2,036	2,103
ALUMINIUM									
Production ('000 tonnes)									
	Hillside	100%	151	169	167	173	171	344	286
	Bayside	100%	46	45	46	46	46	92	93
	Alumar	46.3%	36	44	45	44	45	89	67
	Valesul	45.5%	11	11	11	11	11	22	22
	Mozal	47%	64	64	64	65	65	130	122
	Total		308	333	333	339	338	677	590
BASE METALS (a)									
COPPER									
Payable metal in concentrate ('000 tonnes)									
	Escondida	57.5%	109.1	130.8	159.1	142.5	146.3	288.8	225.0
	Tintaya (b)	100%	15.0	22.9	19.6	14.6	22.1	36.7	15.0
	Antamina	33.8%	20.5	24.6	29.9	29.9	33.4	63.3	37.4
	Highland Valley Copper (c)	33.6%	14.2	-	-	-	-	-	28.3
	Selbaie (d)	100%	1.8	0.8	-	-	-	-	3.4
	Total		160.6	179.1	208.6	187.0	201.8	388.8	309.1
Cathode ('000 tonnes)									
	Escondida	57.5%	21.8	21.7	21.8	21.9	22.2	44.1	43.2
	Cerro Colorado	100%	33.0	28.1	31.3	28.3	30.4	58.7	66.1
	Tintaya (b)	100%	9.0	9.3	8.7	9.3	9.1	18.4	18.0
	Pinto Valley	100%	2.4	2.4	2.2	2.3	2.3	4.6	4.9
	Total		66.2	61.5	64.0	61.8	64.0	125.8	132.2
LEAD									

Payable metal in concentrate (tonnes)									
	Cannington	100%	55,211	70,838	64,472	64,910	71,509	136,419	114,575
	Total		55,211	70,838	64,472	64,910	71,509	136,419	114,575
ZINC									
Payable metal in concentrate (tonnes)									
	Cannington	100%	11,692	13,589	13,493	10,968	13,956	24,924	26,542
	Antamina	33.8%	27,026	19,099	15,545	12,883	6,962	19,845	54,959
	Selbaie (d)	100%	7,194	2,506	-	-	-	-	13,505
	Total		45,912	35,194	29,038	23,851	20,918	44,769	95,006
	Refer footnotes on page 4.								
BASE METALS (continued)									
GOLD									
Payable metal in concentrate (ounces)									
	Escondida	57.5%	24,833	27,492	26,044	25,370	24,475	49,845	49,849
	Tintaya (b)	100%	2,658	4,009	5,101	4,762	6,772	11,534	2,658
	Selbaie (d)	100%	3,428	1,413	-	-	-	-	6,557
	Highland Valley Copper (c)	33.6%	1,166	-	-	-	-	-	2,191
	Total		32,085	32,914	31,145	30,132	31,247	61,379	61,255
SILVER									
Payable metal in concentrate ('000 ounces)									
	Cannington	100%	8,287	10,485	9,471	10,339	11,025	21,364	17,464
	Escondida	57.5%	550	614	720	604	639	1,243	1,111
	Antamina	33.8%	494	588	662	692	503	1,195	929
	Tintaya (b)	100.0%	170	239	200	134	186	319	170
	Highland Valley Copper (c)	33.6%	163	-	-	-	-	-	323
	Selbaie (d)	100%	316	138	-	-	-	-	579

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	Total		9,980	12,064	11,053	11,769	12,353	24,121	20,576
MOLYBDENUM									
Payable metal in concentrate (tonnes)									
	Antamina	33.8%	20	81	240	323	560	883	45
	Highland Valley Copper (c)	33.6%	270	-	-	-	-	-	570
	Total		290	81	240	323	560	883	615
CARBON STEEL MATERIALS									
IRON ORE (e)									
Production ('000 tonnes)									