

PORT HEDLAND DUST MANAGEMENT TASKFORCE

Communiqué – 18 March 2016

The Port Hedland Dust Management Taskforce welcomes the *Port Hedland Air Quality Health Risk Assessment for Particulate Matter*, and the extensive research that informed it.

Port Hedland is in a naturally dusty environment, with high levels of background dust from fires and natural sources. In recent years, the town has grown rapidly, and exports through the port have risen substantially. This development has contributed to high dust levels in the western parts of the town, even though industry and the Port Authority have significantly improved monitoring and managing dust levels¹. The Assessment found evidence that human health may be affected by dust, although it also found that the risks are not excessive or urgent in Port Hedland, mainly because the permanent residential population in the most affected areas of the town is quite small. The Assessment proposes dust management controls and land-use planning to reduce community exposure to dust.

The Taskforce will use information from the Assessment and data from dust modelling and monitoring to make recommendations to Government on how to manage dust in Port Hedland. It will propose broad-based and co-ordinated measures involving State Government agencies, industry, the local community and local council, and planning controls.

Industry will sustain continuous improvement in dust management, and will continue to be subject to risk-based regulation. The Port Hedland Industry Council will maintain its network of air quality monitors in the region, and make data available to the regulator and the wider community.

The Town of Port Hedland will work with State government and the community to improve the amenity of the town, including identifying and addressing dust sources other than the port.

The Town of Port Hedland will work with the Department of Planning and Western Australian Planning Commission to implement measures to limit permanent residential land uses and other sensitive developments in the dust-affected areas.

The Taskforce aims to develop specific recommendations under three broad headings, namely *industry*, *community* and *planning*, by the middle of 2016. This approach is consistent with, and builds on, the Port Hedland Air Quality and Noise Management Plan prepared by the Taskforce in 2010.

Background Notes

The Port Hedland Dust Management Taskforce was established by the Premier in May 2009 to plan for and provide effective dust management strategies in Port Hedland. It includes representatives of the Town of Port Hedland; the Port Authority; the Departments of Health, Planning, State Development and Environmental Regulation; the Environmental Protection Agency; and industry (the Port Hedland Industries Council, BHP and FMG).

On the recommendation of the Taskforce, the Department of Health undertook an evaluation of health risks associated with dust in Port Hedland. The Department published the *Port Hedland Air Quality Health Risk Assessment for Particulate Matter* on 26 February 2016.

¹ For more information refer to http://www.phic-hedland.com.au/phic/Annual_Report.htm