

# Port Hedland Dust Management Taskforce Report to Government

## Public Submission

From: Name Withheld

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Document: Letter attached to email

Thank you for providing the public the opportunity to make public submissions on the Dust Report.

1. On page 3, 1<sup>st</sup> para, "a network of dust monitors in and around Port Hedland to collect data on dust types and level."

This is an important aspect of dust monitoring. We would like to see a consistency in the monitoring and reporting of results from these monitors. Are the monitors being used of the same vintage and are they calibrated on a regular and consistent manner? The quality of data is dependent on the quality and reliability of the measuring instrument.

We also would like to see an integrated reporting of dust monitoring results to the public. BHP is doing its own public reporting, but we can do better by having an independent body which will be responsible in the analyses of all data and reporting to the public. The government, mining companies and Port Authority can contribute towards a common fund to sustain an independent body which will be responsible in the analysis of all data coming from all the monitors and regular reporting to the public.

The use of local newspaper is an excellent avenue to make people aware. BHP has taken a lead in using the local newspaper in reporting, but this can be improved further by having a consolidated and integrated reporting using simple communication techniques that will assist a layman to understand the information being communicated. The government has an important role to play in communicating the information given the health risks associated with dust exposure. The government needs to make people aware of the risks using various means and techniques in communication. The PHIC website is excellent, but how many people, particularly the older people, would be able to navigate the website and gain sense and understanding of the layers of information that is being generated. The newspaper is probably to most accessible source of information for all members of the community. The impacts of dust on human health would be useful information for the public to assist increase their awareness.

2. Page 3, 3<sup>rd</sup> para, "The Health Risk Assessment concluded that there is sufficient evidence of possible negative effects on human health from dust to warrant dust management controls and land-use planning measures to reduce community exposure to dust. Air quality monitoring data indicates that dust levels regularly exceed the Taskforce's interim guideline levels in the far West End (Richardson Street)"

The findings further raise the issue of increasing public awareness. An independent body and the Health Department can work together to improve public awareness on the

impacts of dust on human health. Have the government considered health testing and monitoring? The employees of mining companies and the Port Authority who are exposed to dust on a regular basis, have they been tested since the results of the study came out. Will the government consider health testing of residents of this town?

3. Page 3, 4<sup>th</sup> para, " .... While port users have made substantial progress in reducing the intensity of dust emissions, these measures have not been enough to reduce dust levels to acceptable levels in the West End. If dust levels increase further, they will affect areas further east"

To increase public awareness, it will be good to outline the measures that are effective in reducing dust levels and what further measures can be put in place to improve performance in controlling dust emissions for the benefit of public safety.

4. Page 3, 7<sup>th</sup> para, - "The Town of Port Hedland needs certainty and predictability to manage its own planning and approvals processes and implement its Local Planning Strategy".

The Town should also consider as a priority public safety by addressing existing and recurring sources of dust (corner Anderson and road to the Boulevard, car park in front of Rhode Museum along Wilson Street), and greening of public places to assist in dust mitigation. The Town should consider prioritising its efforts by focusing on addressing existing problems as mentioned above.

5. On page 4, main recommendation, "Exporters should continue to be required to reduce dust emissions arising from port activities, and should be subject to more stringent risk-based regulation aimed at reducing the number of days when standards are exceeded."

It will be useful if the measures (current and proposed) to reduce dust emissions are clearly spelled out. From this list, it will be useful to identify the organisation/s who put into practice these measures. What stringent measures will be put in place to reduce the number of days when standards are exceeded. This will be useful to auditing and monitoring purposes.

6. Page 4, 1.2 Recommendations, Health Risk Assessment - Interim Guideline Recommendation 1.

The Taskforce recommends that the current interim guideline of 24-hour PM10 of ug/m<sup>3</sup> (+10 exceedances to accommodate natural events) continues to apply to residential areas of Port Hedland and that measures should be introduced to cap (and if possible, reduce) the number of permanent residents in dust-affected areas of Port Hedland).

How does the frequency and duration of exposure impact on health? What about the workers at the port? Should the government consider reducing the number of workers directly working at sources of dust? Will you consider mandatory health testing of all workers at the port and those people in dust-affected areas?

Will you consider a lower exposure level of less than PM10 and assess the health risks associated with that level of exposure?

7. Page 4, 1.2 Recommendations, Industry and Dust Noise Management Regulation – Air Quality Monitoring  
Recommendation 2 – When will the Department of Environment Regulation issue regulations to implement this recommendation?
8. Page 6, Local Government and Community  
Recommendation 6

Open, large spaces that are constantly used by the public and which generate dusts everyday (day and night) even when it is not windy (e.g. corner Anderson and road going to the Boulevard) should be given priority. Another is the parking area in front of the Rhode Museum along Wilson Street.

9. Governance  
Recommendation 7

Reporting to the public, and compilation of community feedback including complaints can be an important additional structure of Governance. The local community should be part of the decision-making structure.

10. Page 22, 3<sup>rd</sup> para, "... The study produced noise models for emissions from port facilities and rail and road usage.....'

It will be good if a public forum can be organised to explain the results of this study and its implications.

11. Page 24, last para, " Consistent with the precautionary principle approach....recommends the progressive transition from permanent residential uses under the current West End Residential zone towards a longer term land use scenario with no permanent residential (short-stay accommodation only) west of Action Street.

What about the workers working in dust zone areas. How you are going to protect them from further exposure?

12. Page 25, 2<sup>nd</sup> para, "... The Health Risk Assessment recommends that "the closer to the port and Nelson Point operations, the tighter the required restrictions" and notes that "current regulatory controls for managing dust from operations at Nelson Point and Finucane Island may be aided by declaring a buffer between the port and residential areas further to the east".

What restrictions are put in place. Again, how do you protect the workers in dust zone areas?

13. An important issue that has not been adequately discussed is the doubling of the tonnage of iron ore to be exported by the producers and the possibility of the export facilities for the extra volume being located west of Port Hedland where the low water mark is relatively close to the mainland and diversion of export product by rail is possible. This would mean that the town would not experience any additional contribution to what

the existing dust pollution is making. Further improvements in dust management could be made reducing the effect of the existing dust. This may be a better solution to the outer harbour expansion. Has the Pilbara Ports Authority investigated other sites for the expansion of the port?