



## Environmental Protection Authority

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#### Port Hedland Noise and Dust

In the Environmental Protection Authority's (EPA) Report 1311 (released concurrently with this Bulletin) the EPA noted in the 'Other Advice' section that while the Utah Point Berth Project (Stage B) proposal would lead to some local improvement in air quality and reduction in noise levels in the west end of Port Hedland, it would not result in improvements in the overall area of Port Hedland where dust and noise impacts are already of concern. As a new facility, the proposal would result in an incremental increase in dust and noise emissions to the overall air-shed of Port Hedland.

Dust and noise levels in the Port Hedland townsite have historically been above currently accepted recommended levels, and still are. This is something that has been known for some time and has led to some coordinated attempts by the state and local governments and industry to plan and act for long-term improvements to air quality and noise levels. However, in the EPA's opinion this has not delivered integrated land use planning and management outcomes that will ensure acceptable air quality and noise levels are achieved in the future.

Furthermore, the EPA is concerned that previous cumulative impact studies (undertaken as part of the planning process) and recent scientific literature, indicates that the current land use strategy for the town of Port Hedland is likely to be inadequate in terms of reducing human health impacts from iron ore dust. The current strategy is to plan for the relocation of more vulnerable people (e.g. seniors, children and persons with existing heart or lung disease) out of the affected areas of Port Hedland with the expectation that this will reduce human health impacts to acceptable levels. The exclusion from this strategy of the remainder of the Port Hedland population in affected areas is of concern. In addition, a recent study by Perez et al, (2008) it was found that airborne dust comprised of PM10 sized particles significantly increased the risk of mortality for the residents in the study location of Barcelona, Spain. These results were for PM10 arising from dust in the Sahara desert and suggest that the health effects of iron ore dust at the levels experienced in Port Hedland may be greater than previously thought and that all residential areas may be affected. The EPA is therefore of the view the health effects of PM10 arising from sources such as dust in the absence of other sources needs to be given urgent attention.

It is the EPA's view that a coordinated government and industry approach to the development and execution of an integrated government and industry strategy (with explicit emission reduction strategies and explicit exposure reduction strategies) is required with strong and inclusive governance arrangements. This will ensure accountability for reporting publicly on performance in achieving air quality and noise objectives.

The EPA regards this as an outstanding issue that needs to be addressed as a matter of high priority. It will require leadership, co-ordination and resolve at a level greater than has been evident hitherto.

**References:**

Perez L, Tobias A, Querol X, et al. (2008) Coarse Particles from Saharan dust and daily mortality. *Epidemiology* 19: 800-807