

MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT

PARDOO DIRECT SHIPPING IRON ORE PROJECT – PROPOSAL UNDER S46 OF THE EP ACT TO REMOVE CONDITION 8-1 RELATED TO TROGLOFAUNA.

I refer to your letter of 12 March 2009 requesting the EPA to report to you on Atlas Iron Limited's proposed changes to the environmental conditions for the Pardoo Direct Shipping Iron Ore Project

The following is the EPA's Report and Recommendations (No. 1320) to you pursuant to section 46(3) of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*.

Introduction

Ministerial Statement 775 was published on 3 October 2008, granting approval for the Pardoo Direct Shipping Iron Ore project subject to the implementation of conditions, including condition 8-1 which states that:

“Prior to commencement of operations within the South Limb deposit, the proponent shall have demonstrated the presence of the troglobitic species Ideoblothrus n. sp in an area outside the mining footprint.”

In response to this condition Atlas Iron Limited has conducted substantial troglofauna survey work both within and outside the South Limb Deposit; however, no further specimens of *Ideoblothrus n. sp* have been collected from the Pardoo project area. Atlas requests that Condition 8-1 be removed from Ministerial Statement 775 in order to allow mining at the South Limb deposit to commence.

Discussion

The intent of the condition which was recommended to the Minister by the EPA was to:

1. Demonstrate that mining in south limb was not likely to pose a threat to the population of the species *Ideoblothrus n. sp*;
2. Ensure that the proponent had been sufficiently diligent in assessing risks to the species; and

3. Contribute to risk assessment of this fauna into the future.

Atlas Iron Limited commissioned Subterranean Ecology Pty Ltd to undertake additional troglofauna survey work in the South Limb deposit and surrounding areas. This sampling was in addition to the 161 samples collected during the assessment process, and comprised an additional 228 samples, including:

- 75 Traps in the South Limb deposit;
- 25 Scrape samples at south limb and other deposits;
- 91 traps at various deposits as part of a separate troglofauna survey; and
- 37 traps at the Ridley deposit.

The combined sampling program of 389 samples performed by the proponent is in excess of the sampling requirements recommended in Draft EPA Guidance Statement 54a, *Sampling Methods and Considerations for Subterranean Fauna in Western Australia* (August 2007)

All of the troglomorphic species collected during sampling at Pardoo were collected in low abundance, ranging from one to five specimens. This is consistent with numerous other studies in the Pilbara area. It is therefore not statistically surprising that no further specimens of *Ideoblothrus* n. sp. were collected.

The survey results support the conclusion that troglomorphic taxa across the Pardoo deposits forms a single ecological community. The presence of several common troglomorphic taxa between sampled deposits indicates that troglomorphic taxa collected within haematite and BIF areas are wide ranging across the Ord ranges. There is no obvious barrier to fauna dispersal, and therefore no physical reason why any species of troglofauna, including *Ideoblothrus* n. sp. should be confined to the South Limb deposit.

Conclusion

The conservation status of *Ideoblothrus* n. sp. is not necessarily dependant on the mine pits proposed at South Limb. The proponent has demonstrated appropriate diligence in performing troglofauna surveys in the Pardoo area and has contributed sufficient knowledge to future troglofauna risk assessments.

EPA Recommendation

That Condition 8.1 referring to the troglofauna species *Ideoblothrus* n.sp. be removed from Ministerial Statement 775.

Dr Paul Vogel
CHAIRMAN

21 April 2009