



# MEDIA STATEMENT

**Saturday, 17 April 2010**

In response to the article in today's *Northern Territory News*, Darwin Port Corporation Chief Executive Officer Robert Ritchie said Darwin Port Corporation had taken the incidents very seriously.

"It is important to me, as the Chief Executive Officer, that we operate responsibly and without harm to the environment or workers at the port.

"We will cooperate fully with any inquiries into the two incidents because it is in the interests of both the port and all port operators to have the best systems in place that we possibly can.

"However, to provide some context, both issues referred to in the media took place some time ago and, in conjunction with the operator, we had already taken some serious and urgent action improve procedures covering the export of bulk minerals," Mr Ritchie said.

This includes:

- the conveyor belt is now substantially enclosed to minimise the escape of dust
- we have spent \$1.5 million redesigning the conveyor system to prevent dust catching
- the chutes now have to be cleaned before ships depart so if any product is left behind, it falls into the ship's hull not into the water
- we have implemented a number of additional dust suppression techniques, such as spraying the ore if it is too dry, and the operator is trialling a special foam
- vacuum cleaning of the wharf area with an industrial sweeper.

"We are planning a number of other measures, including a major redesign of East Arm Wharf that will include a complete drainage plan and bunds to capture any stormwater run off. We expect work on this to start before the end of the year.

"In January, we commissioned environmental consultancy Coffey Environments to review our 2003 Environmental Management System and provide independent advice on anything we can do to improve procedures," Mr Ritchie said.

## **November incident**

OzMinerals has been exporting copper concentrate through East Arm Wharf since April 2009. Usually the copper concentrate is sufficiently damp to reduce dust. However, in November, a shipment was dryer than usual, causing a dust plume.

## **January incident**

In January a stevedore reported ore falling into the harbour. The port believes some caked ore had been caught in a conveyor and dropped into the water some time after the ship had left. The conveyor had been completely cleaned, but the port believes some ore caught behind a deflector panel.

“We believe only a small amount of ore was involved” Mr Ritchie said.

“However, we conducted an investigation and a series of measures was implemented to ensure this sort of thing doesn’t happen again.

“The operator, OzMinerals, has an environmental management plan covering all its operations at the port.

“We have met today with the Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts and invited them to view the next ship loading of copper concentrate next week.

“We will seek any input from the department, WorkHealth and other regulators to improve our procedures,” Mr Ritchie said.

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