



media release

EPA REPORT FINDS NO EVIDENCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL HARM IN 2011 EDITH RIVER INCIDENTS

20th December 2012

The Environment Protection Agency (EPA) today released its Investigation Report into the environmental incidents at Edith River in December 2011, finding that biological monitoring did not provide any evidence that actual environmental harm occurred as a result of the train derailment or wastewater discharge from the Mount Todd mine site.

The Assessment of Harm on Edith River Associated with Train Derailment and Wastewater Discharges from Mount Todd Gold Mine (27 December 2011 – 5 January 2012) report found there was the *potential* for environmental harm to be caused by the copper concentrate from the train derailment and the release of waste water from the mine site, however there was no evidence of *actual* environmental harm.

Paul Purdon, Director of Environment Protection and Sustainability with the EPA says the incidents, which occurred during an extreme weather event in the form of Cyclone Grant, were adequately reported and monitored and led to a significant recovery and clean up response from the companies involved.

“As a result of these findings, the absence of actual environmental harm, the status of recovery efforts and in line with Prosecution Guidelines, the EPA has determined that further consideration of a prosecution against the companies involved in the incidents is not warranted,” Paul Purdon said.

On 27 December 2011, a freight train owned and operated by Genesee & Wyoming Australia Pty Ltd derailed at the Edith River Bridge Crossing following high rainfall associated with Cyclone Grant. Approximately 240 tonnes of freight, a crew van, 16 containers, and an approximate total dry load of copper concentrate of 1500 dry metric tonnes overturned into the Edith River. The derailment was reported to the Pollution Hotline operated by the EPA.

On the same day Vista Gold Australia Pty Ltd, who manage the legacy mine site at Mount Todd, reported to the Pollution Hotline operated by the EPA an uncontrolled discharge from Retention Pond 1 (RP1) via a spillway into the Edith River. Uncontrolled discharges from the mine continued from 27 December 2011 until 5 January 2012.

Following these incidents, water, sediment and a range of specialised testing was undertaken by the NT EPA between 28 December 2011 and 17 July 2012 to assess whether there was potential and / or actual environmental harm caused to the Edith and Daly River systems as a result of the incidents. Vista Gold, Genesee & Wyoming Australia and OZ Minerals all conducted independent monitoring and assessments as required.

“While there was evidence of the potential for environmental harm as a result of the incidents, the absence of actual environmental harm significantly reduces the severity of any offence. The

investigative steps taken by the NT EPA, Vista Gold and OZ Minerals respectively confirm the absence of actual environmental harm and are detailed in the Investigation Report.”

“A small amount of copper concentrate impacted material may remain within heavily vegetated and AAPA (Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority) restricted areas close to the derailment site. There may also be some undiscovered debris remaining downstream of the site. An independent assessment has advised the risks to human health and the environment from remnant copper concentrate or debris are low.

“Genesee & Wyoming Australia will return to the site with the NT EPA early in the 2013 Dry season to re-assess if any further freight clean-up is required,” Mr Purdon said.

To view the *Assessment of Harm on Edith River Associated with Train Derailment and Wastewater Discharges from Mount Todd Gold Mine (27 December 2011 – 5 January 2012)* report, go to <http://www.nretas.nt.gov.au/environment-protection/waste/investigations>

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