PETER CHANDLER MLA | Member for BRENNAN
MINISTER FOR LANDS, PLANNING AND THE ENVIRONMENT

MEDIA RELEASE

ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT OUT ON EDITH RIVER INCIDENTS

20 December 2012

Minister for Lands, Planning and the Environment, Peter Chandler, today received a copy of the Environment Protection Agency’s report on incidents at Edith River in December 2011.

Mr Chandler said the independent body has found that biological monitoring shows no evidence of environmental harm from two events on the same day – a train derailment and a release of surface water from the Mount Todd gold mine.

Mr Chandler said the report found that further consideration of a prosecution against the companies involved was not warranted.

On 27 December 2011, a freight train owned and operated by Genesee & Wyoming Australia Pty Ltd derailed at the Edith River Bridge Crossing. About 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. This was reported to the Pollution Hotline operated by the EPA.

Also reported on the same day was a suspected “uncontrolled discharge” via a spillway into the Edith River from Mount Todd mine’s Retention Pond 1 (RP1). The report was made by Vista Gold Australia Pty Ltd (Vista Gold). Uncontrolled discharges from the mine continued from 27 December 2011 until 5 January 2012.

Mr Chandler said the report identified that:

- Copper concentrations attributable to the accident occurred over a short time and were therefore unlikely to have a long term environmental impact;
- Reporting and monitoring of the events was adequate;
- There was a significant recovery and clean up response by the companies.

Mr Chandler said the EPA had organised an independent review that determined health and environmental risks were low from remaining small amount of debris.
Mr Chandler said the agency advised that the rail company would be conducting a further assessment to consider whether a further clean up of freight was necessary.

“I am pleased that there was no long term environmental damage to the area,” Mr Chandler said.

“Accidents such as these are regrettable but there has been extensive analysis of the effects of the spill of copper.

“I am satisfied that there will be ongoing monitoring of the area.”

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