

Taplin Street investigations closed

Investigations commissioned by the Port Hedland Industries Council after inconsistent readings were confirmed at the Taplin Street monitor within the Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Network have been completed.

Data discrepancies were confirmed by Ecotech, which maintains and operates the Network, on 23 January 2020.

PHIC commissioned a series of checks of the Taplin Street monitoring unit in mid-2019 when it did not record any days above the 24-hour average interim guideline for PM₁₀ of 70 µg/m³. Those checks found no faults or anomalies.

The inconsistent readings were confirmed after the 2018/19 AAQMN annual report was published in November 2019, and when PHIC asked for a parallel monitoring unit to be installed at Taplin Street.

A series of further investigations were commissioned in a bid to determine the cause of the inconsistent readings, revalidate data from the Network, and assess Ecotech's management of the Network.

The US manufacturers found no faults with the Taplin Street equipment.

Consultant GHD found that Ecotech had met or exceeded Australian Standards in its management of the Network.

Testing determined that the new Taplin Street monitor is now producing consistent data readings.

Because no faults could be found with the monitoring equipment, it is not possible to determine with certainty the correct readings for Taplin Street during 2018/19.

A preliminary review of the Network data has estimated that exceedances of the 24-hour average guideline for PM₁₀ of 70 µg/m³ at Taplin Street were between 9 and 13. The review also noted that 2018/19 was a year with high background dust levels. Readings from BOM and Yule monitors (12 kms and 45 kms from the Port of Port Hedland) indicate up to 7 exceedances can be attributed to natural occurrences.

PHIC believes that the Taplin Street monitors have been recording accurate data since 1 January 2020, when replacement monitors were installed. There have been three exceedances from 1 January 2020 to 13 August 2020, with two in January potentially attributed to Cyclone Blake.

PHIC Chief Executive Officer Kirsty Danby said she was disappointed the inconsistent readings had occurred, but that it was PHIC's insistence on investigating the issue that uncovered the anomalies.

"PHIC takes its role in providing data from the Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Network seriously," Ms Danby said.

"We engage Ecotech, an appropriately qualified and experienced independent specialist air quality consultant, to operate and maintain the Network and generate fully validated monitoring data."

The Network is being transferred to the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation.

PHIC supports the transfer of the Network, has been working with DWER to achieve this outcome, and supports any move that would fast-track the process.

Ends

Media contact:

Chris Manly

Platform Communications

chris@platformcommunications.com.au

0434 308 552

ABOUT PHIC

PHIC is an incorporated organisation with the overarching objective of assisting the Port and Port Hedland to achieve its maximum potential. PHIC provides a forum for information sharing and knowledge transfer and assists partner companies to manage and minimise the impacts of industry on the community.

Through its members, PHIC brings substantial industry expertise and a coordinated response to industry issues and is a single, industry-wide point of contact for government and community engagement concerning industry development, environment, safety and land-use planning.

As an organisation, PHIC takes a collaborative approach and works to achieve its goals through inputs from several committees set up to actively participate and provide input on a range of common issues.

Committee members are volunteers with experience, expertise and authority within member companies.

PHIC acts collaboratively for the benefit of industry and the Port Hedland community to ensure the long-term, sustainable growth of the Port.

PHIC comprises the Pilbara Ports Authority, BHP, FMG, Roy Hill, Consolidated Minerals and Mineral Resources.