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Media Statement

FMG-owned company fined over hypersaline spill

An East Perth-based resources company has been fined \$25,000 over a hypersaline discharge that impacted vegetation at a Pilbara mine site.

The Department of Environment Regulation (DER) issued a Modified Penalty to Chichester Metals Pty Ltd, owned by Fortescue Metals Group (FMG), in May 2015 after 2.5–3.6 million litres of hypersaline water was released into nearby vegetation.

Close to double the salinity of sea water, the water was discharged via an open valve on a pipeline and impacted approximately 7.5 hectares of vegetation – Mulga and Acacia trees and undergrowth.

Chichester Metals Pty Ltd, which operates FMG’s Cloudbreak Iron Ore Mine in Mulga Downs, notified DER promptly following the incident, immediately began remediation of the site, cooperated with DER during the investigation and reviewed processes to prevent a recurrence.

DER Acting Director General Dan Volaric said while the company had taken steps to prevent reoccurrences in the future, the emission was significant.

“The penalty of \$25,000 is appropriate in this circumstance, considering the magnitude of the spill,” Mr Volaric said.

“Incidents like this could be prevented and DER will continue to impose such penalties in an effort to prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future.”

A Modified Penalty is issued when the required statutory conditions involving timely notification, site remediation and measures to prevent a recurrence have been met.

The company has paid the fine.



Between 2.5–3.6 million litres of hypersaline water was discharged into nearby vegetation (image above taken on the day of the spill, showing healthy vegetation).



The above image was taken 12 months after the discharge, showing impacted vegetation.

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