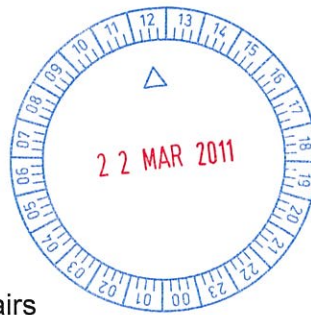


PUBLIC



WESTERN
AUSTRALIA



MINISTER FOR MINES
AND PETROLEUM;
FISHERIES;
ELECTORAL AFFAIRS;
LEADER OF THE
GOVERNMENT IN THE
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Our Ref: **26-08919**

Hon Brian Ellis MLC
Chairman
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Mr Ellis

PETITION NO 94 - WATER USE IN KARRATHA - REQUEST THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SUPPORT TO CEASE USE OF DRINKING WATER FOR DUST SUPPRESSION

Thank you for your letter dated 18 February 2011 regarding the issues raised in Petition No 94 concerning the use of drinking water for industrial purposes such as subdivisions, construction sites, dust suppression and wetting down iron ore stacks at the port for Rio Tinto.

I can advise that the water used for these purposes is the subject of State Agreements for the supply of water to company port facilities and coastal towns at Dampier and Cape Lambert. These agreements are based on extracting water from the Millstream aquifer and a pipeline system (built by Hamersley and Robe River Iron Ore) conveying that water to the coast (the Millstream Agreement 1976). Therefore the water used for dust suppression and other industrial uses is water to which Rio Tinto has an entitlement, as well as owning the infrastructure.

Increased demand for potable water for domestic and industrial use has led to increased interest in identifying new water sources. Rio Tinto has proposed using water from dewatering activities at the proposed new mine at Bungaroo Creek (near Pannawonica). The amount of water available from this source has been estimated at seven gigalitres per year which will meet the immediate and short term shortfall, however it is unlikely to meet future increases in demand.

In 1985 the State built Harding Dam to augment the West Pilbara Water Supply Scheme, with financial contributions from Woodside and the Commonwealth Government, to relieve pressure on the Millstream aquifer.

An amount of \$2.5 million has been allocated from the Pilbara Revitalisation Plan for studies to identify better use of water resources in the region. The studies are intended to examine opportunities that could open the way for primary and secondary industry expansion in the region.

A pre-feasibility study has already been completed which identified options that could provide economic diversity through irrigated agriculture and horticulture opportunities. The projects could also increase the opportunities for Indigenous people in the region. The study also considered the use of water from mine dewatering with the potential for this water to be used in irrigated agriculture or horticulture.

Yours sincerely

A blue ink signature of Norman Moore MLC, written in a cursive style.

NORMAN MOORE MLC
MINISTER FOR MINES AND PETROLEUM

21 MAR 2011