

EPA Board Communiqué

February 2019

Regular Meeting 123, Tuesday 5 February 2019, and out-of-session meeting, Wednesday 20 February 2019

Assessment of the Hellyer Gold Mine, Tailings Storage Facility

Hellyer Gold Mines Pty Ltd is reprocessing tailings from the former Hellyer mine at Guilford. A new tailings storage facility is required to store processed tailings while tailings for processing are dredged from the old tailings dam. The Board inspected the site of the new tailings storage facility in January 2019. There were no representations in relation to the application.

The Board noted that the site proposed for the new facility is downstream of the existing dam in a partly degraded area and there are no significant natural values. The main issue considered by the Board was the management of the tailings to prevent the generation of acid drainage and the quality of effluent discharged from the tailings dam. The Board determined that, on environmental grounds, the proposal could proceed subject to conditions and resolved to notify the Waratah–Wynyard Council accordingly.

Assessment of two applications to install Drum Filters by Saltas.

Saltas Enterprises of Tasmania operates hatcheries for salmon at Wayatinah and Florentine. The hatcheries are mostly flow-through facilities discharging fish wastes with the water that has been pumped through the growing ponds. The company proposes to install drum filters at both sites to remove solid wastes and improve the quality of water discharge from the sites.

The Board noted that regulation of these hatcheries has relatively recently passed to the EPA and that the flow-through systems used would not now be regarded as best practice. Nonetheless, the improvement of water quality via the installation of the filters is welcome. The main issues considered by the Board were the emission limits to be set, the potential for bypass of the drum filters and the extent to which the filters would reduce nutrient emissions. There were four representations made in relation to the applications.

The Board resolved to approve the applications subject to conditions, which included a requirement for ambient monitoring to determine the impact of the hatcheries on the downstream environments and the effectiveness of the filters. The monitoring will also enable revised emission limits to be set.

Special Fee Remissions

The Board considered three applications for special fee remissions.

The Board noted that Australian Bauxite had not operated its mine near Campbelltown during the previous annual fee period but had sold material from stockpiles. Having considered the regulatory effort expended by the EPA, the Board granted a partial fee remission for the period.

The Board considered the complicated set of circumstances surrounding the application by Creeko Pty Ltd for a special fee remission in relation to a small tin mine near Gladstone, and resolved to grant a partial fee remission.

The Board noted that Tasmanian Irrigation had been granted a permit for the Dalness Dam quarry, but had been able to source material for the dam without opening the quarry. The Board agreed to remit the majority of the annual permit fee.

Decision on whether to assess the excavation for Motown Complex at MONA, Berriedale.

The Board held a special meeting to determine whether to assess the excavation component of the proposed Motown complex at MONA. Under EMPCA the Board has the capacity to decide not to assess an application for a Level 2 activity provided the decision is made within 14 days of the application being referred by a planning authority. The Board has put in place guidelines to set out its policy on such decisions, which are normally made under delegation given the time constraints that apply.

The Board considered this application in the context of its guidelines. It noted that while a large amount of material is to be extracted (approximately 126,000 m³) there is a significant buffer to residential areas; about 400m to sensitive uses in Berriedale and almost 2 km to residences on the other side of the Derwent River. With the assistance of the Noise Specialist, the Board considered the potential for the activity to cause nuisance from noise, taking into account the types of equipment to be used and the care that would need to be taken with any blasting given the close proximity of MONA. The Board also noted the restrictions on construction activities contained in the Noise Regulations. The Board concluded that there was a very low likelihood of nuisance and resolved not to assess the proposal.