

NEWS RELEASE

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IMPROVING OUR ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

BHP Billiton Western Australia Iron Ore (WAIO) has lodged a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of its central Pilbara iron ore assets to contribute to the long term environmental planning and management of its operations.

The SEA is the first of its kind in the Australian mining industry and gives an overview of the regional environmental footprint of all of the Company's current and potential future Pilbara-based iron ore operations.

BHP Billiton Western Australia Iron Ore Asset President, Edgar Basto said the Company had been operating in the Pilbara for almost 50 years and understood the environmental impacts of its operations in the region.

"We are proud to be the first mining company to use our environmental knowledge to prepare and submit a Strategic Environmental Assessment in Australia which could help build a long-term sustainable future for not only WAIO, but also the Western Australian community," Mr Basto said.

"The SEA provides greater visibility of our potential environmental footprint over the next 50 to 100 years, improving our ability, as well as the Government and others in the industry, to plan for future operations.

"It outlines where we may develop in the future so any potential impacts on the environment can be assessed and adequately managed for future generations."

Mr. Basto said the Company would still be required to work with relevant departments to ensure necessary approvals were sought for individual projects, but the SEA takes a look at the Company's environmental plan over the long term in a more considered and complete way.

"Previously, we worked through the approval process for individual projects in isolation. We can now look at how future developments may interact and think about what we need to do to manage any impacts in advance," he said.

"It gives the Company, industry, the community and regulators a more comprehensive understanding of the region, which ultimately helps everyone to more effectively manage our natural resources.

“It’s about being transparent in our future plans and recognising that environmental impacts are not confined to one particular mining project and should be looked at more holistically.”

The SEA will be made public and open for comment from 21 March 2016 and Mr Basto said the Assessment would provide a readily available source of environmental information for others to draw on.

“We expect to continue to mine in the region for more than 100 years, which enables us to give back to the communities that have supported us for so long. The SEA demonstrates our ongoing commitment to the Pilbara and our host communities over the long term,” he said.

The SEA will be submitted to both the Commonwealth and WA State Governments for their endorsement.

Decisions on production volumes and the development or execution of further greenfield or expansion projects remain independent commercial decisions that are separate from the SEA.

Further information on BHP Billiton can be found at: **bhpbilliton.com**

Media Relations

Australia and Asia

Emily Perry
Tel : +61 3 9609 2800 Mobile +61 477 325 803
Email : Emily.Perry@bhpbilliton.com

Eleanor Colonico
Tel: +61 3 9609 2360 Mobile +61 407 064 748
Email: Eleanor.Colonico@bhpbilliton.com

Paul Hitchins
Tel: +61 3 9609 2592 Mobile +61 419 315 001
Email: Paul.Hitchins@bhpbilliton.com

United Kingdom and South Africa

Ruban Yogarajah
Tel: +44 207 802 4033 Mobile +44 7827 082 022
Email: Ruban.Yogarajah@bhpbilliton.com

Jennifer White
Tel : +44 207 802 7462 Mobile +44 7827 253 764
Email: Jennifer.White@bhpbilliton.com

North America

Jaryl Strong
Tel: +1 713 499 5548 Mobile: +1 281 222 6627
Email: Jaryl.Strong@bhpbilliton.com

BHP Billiton Limited ABN 49 004 028 077
Registered in Australia
Registered Office: Level 18, 171 Collins Street
Melbourne Victoria 3000 Australia
Tel +61 1300 55 4757 Fax +61 3 9609 3015

Investor Relations

Australia and Asia

Tara Dines
Tel: +61 3 9609 2222 Mobile: +61 499 249 005
Email: Tara.Dines@bhpbilliton.com

Andrew Gunn
Tel: +61 3 9609 3575 Mobile: +61 402 087 354
Email: Andrew.Gunn@bhpbilliton.com

United Kingdom and South Africa

Jonathan Price
Tel: +44 20 7802 4131 Mobile: +44 7990 527 726
Email: Jonathan.H.Price@bhpbilliton.com

Americas

James Wear
Tel: +1 212 310 1421 Mobile: +1 347 882 3011
Email: James.Wear@bhpbilliton.com

Joseph Suarez
Tel: +1 212 310 1422 Mobile: +1 646 400 3803
Email: Joseph.Suarez@bhpbilliton.com

BHP Billiton Plc Registration number 3196209
Registered in England and Wales
Registered Office: Neathouse Place
London SW1V 1LH United Kingdom
Tel +44 20 7802 4000 Fax +44 20 7802 4111

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