

# Update from the Department of Environment and Resource Management

2 March 2010

To date, the Department of Environment and Resource Management has been notified of discharges from eighteen coal mines across the Fitzroy River basin as a result of heavy rain during February.

Six of these mines have advised they have breached their licence conditions. These mines are:

- Blackwater Coal Mine,
- Peak Downs Coal Mine,
- Moorvale Coal Mine,
- Moranbah North Coal Mine
- Rolleston Coal Mine and
- Blair Athol Mine.

While three of these mines have ceased discharging, the remaining three – Moranbah North Coal Mine, Moorvale Coal Mine and Peak Downs Coal Mine – are continuing to discharge.

**Peak Downs Coal Mine** discharged water at a greater rate and into a lower flow than authorised for a period of approximately 7 days. The mine advised the department that this action was taken to minimise the potential for discharge of water with a much higher EC. After ceasing discharge for a short time, discharge recommenced with the Electrical Conductivity (EC) slightly higher than the limit set in the licence.

**Moorvale Coal Mine** notified the department it had discharged water with a higher EC and pH than allowed under its Environmental Authority. This discharge commenced on 18/02/2010 and is ongoing. The pH of the water came within licence limits within 2 days of the discharge starting.

**Moranbah North Coal Mine** is discharging from two points, to the Isaac River, with an EC above licence limits. These notifications have been more recent, with one discharge commencing on Monday 1 March following heavy rain on 28 February. DERM will be undertaking monitoring of EC in the Isaac River as part of its investigations into these releases.

**Blackwater Coal Mine** advised the department that it had discharged mine affected water, over a 3 hour period, with an EC higher than licence conditions.

**Rolleston Coal Mine** advised that it discharged mine affected water which breached its allowable suspended solids limit over an 8 day period.

**Blair Athol Mine** released a relatively small volume of approximately 17,000 litres over a 3 day period with an EC and sulphate level above licence conditions.

DERM is investigating all releases from coal mines as a result of the recent heavy rains.

The operator of the Rolleston Coal Mine has applied to DERM for approval of a Transitional Environmental Program (TEP). This application was resubmitted on 2 March 2010 following comments on the initial application by DERM. If approved the TEP would allow the short-term discharge of mine affected water containing higher amounts of suspended solids than allowed under the company's Environmental Authority.

DERM will assess the TEP application in accordance with relevant legislation and has undertaken to inform FWQAG members of its final decision on the application.

DERM will keep all interested parties informed of the discharges, and the impact of them, as investigations progress.