

Submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Continuation of Construction of the Perth Freight Link in the Face of Significant Environmental Breaches.

I wish to draw the Committee's attention to the existence of high levels of pollution in the soil and groundwater along parts of the route of the proposed Perth Freight Link.

The Baseline Wetland Condition Survey and Drainage Monitoring Plan prepared for Main Roads WA by Aurecon (2016) notes that the ANZECC Guidelines for pollution of the groundwater, surface water and sediments were exceeded at many locations along the route of Roe 8. The principal pollutants found included lead, aluminium, copper, nickel, zinc, nitrates, phosphorus and acidity (pH). Some of the pollutant levels exceeded the ANZECC 2000 guidelines by considerable margins.

In addition, I am aware that asbestos waste was found at several sites in the Coolbellup bushland during clearing operations for Roe 8.

This area was used for agriculture and military training in the past and both of these activities could have led to the contamination that the consultants found in their studies.

On the basis of this evidence I believe that the Office of the EPA (OEPA) should have declared the area to be a contaminated site and they should have put special provisions in place to prevent the spread of the contamination and to protect the health of the workers and the public. This approach is accepted practice for contaminated sites in Western Australia. However, as far as I am aware, the OEPA and the DER have failed to act on these concerns and in the meantime the asbestos and the contaminated sediments have been disturbed by earth moving operations. I have seen considerable amounts of dust produced by these clearing and earthmoving operations for Roe 8.

I believe that the OEPA should now declare the area to be a contaminated site and that strict hygiene procedures should be put in place to protect the public and the environment from the further spread of this pollution.

Philip Jennings
Emeritus Professor of Physics and Energy Studies
Murdoch University

Reference

Aurecon Australasia Pty Ltd, Roe Highway Extension: Baseline Wetland Condition Survey and Drainage Monitoring, September 2015 – February 2016, Report Number 247607-009-R-001 (31 October 2016)