

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS – HEARING 3,
QUESTION 19**

Hunter and coal dust from coals trains

- 19. The EPA notes in its submission that the environment protection licence conditions do not specifically address issues associated with air emissions from locomotives and fugitive dust emissions from wagons. (p 183)**
- a. In the EPA's view, should they?**
 - b. Would it assist the EPA if the licence conditions did address these issues?**
 - c. Have any steps been taken to update the licences??**

ANSWER

The EPA has and is undertaking a range of regulatory actions to ensure that the environment protection licences (EPLs) of parties whose activities may contribute to the 'emissions in the Hunter rail corridor' issue have appropriate conditions and obligations imposed on them.

The EPL of the Australian Rail Track Corporation contains standard conditions, common across all environment protection licences, that require all plant and equipment used on licensed premises to be properly and efficiently operated and a general obligation to minimise dust from the premises. This is an outcomes-based approach that gives greater scope for innovative and efficient means of meeting these requirements. These requirements are subject to compliance monitoring and audits by the EPA.

Questions 13-16 of the Supplementary Questions and Answers dated 11 December detailed the Pollution Reduction Programs included as licence conditions in relation to fugitive dust emissions from coal wagons.

Under the PRPs on ARTC's EPL, the EPA required ARTC to investigate whether the movement of uncovered loaded coal trains were contributing appreciably more dust to ambient air quality than other train movements. These investigations found that there was no statistical difference in particulate matter levels associated with the movement of loaded coal trains compared with other types of freight trains and therefore did not support the view that air quality would be significantly improved by covering coal wagons. However, the results of the EPA's investigations have indicated some other possible issues relating to coal trains and the rail industry in general, such as air quality impacts from coal loss due to inadequate loading and unloading practices and air quality impacts from exhaust emissions from locomotives.

In March 2014 the EPA issued notices to Sydney Trains, ARTC and John Holland Rail to provide information and records about how track managers monitored and managed spilt or fugitive coal in the rail corridor. Review of the information obtained in response to these notices demonstrated that the most effective means of minimising any impacts from the loss of coal from trains is through preventing the loss in the first instance through the loading and unloading processes.

The EPA has also undertaken an audit of the loading and unloading practices at coal mines and terminals and has commissioned a literature review of coal train dust management practices.

Based on this information, the EPA is investigating coal handling and management practices during loading, transporting and unloading coal. Information on these investigations is provided separately to the Committee.