

Media Statement

18 April 2019

Abbot Point Operations today confirmed it has paid a Penalty Infringement Notice from the Queensland Government in relation to floodwater entering the Caley Valley Wetlands during extreme weather and floods experienced in February this year.

The following statement is in response to this action, and can be attributed to an Abbot Point Operations spokesperson:

"We have today paid a Penalty Infringement Notice from the Queensland Department of Environment and Science related to the release of flood water from an authorised release point at Abbot Point Terminal during the February extreme weather. The Infringement Notice included a penalty of \$13,055.

"While the release only exceeded authorized levels by a small amount, we recognize that an exceedance occurred, and that's why we have accepted the Infringement Notice.

"Importantly the Caley Valley Wetlands and Great Barrier Reef were not harmed by the flood water release.

"The weather North Queensland experienced in February was an extreme event. Homes, businesses, farms, roads and rail lines were damaged in the floods and repairs are ongoing.

"At the time, Abbot Point had received more than 900mm of rainfall at the Port since December 2018 alone.

"Despite this extreme weather event, our team ensured that no floodwater entered the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, there was no environmental harm to the Caley Valley Wetlands, and the elevation in total suspended solids was a fraction of the levels usually found in flood events.

"The flood water that did enter the Caley Valley Wetlands was released via an authorised release point.

"Flood water entering the wetlands from Abbot Point Operations authorised release point was sent for analysis to an accredited third-party, confirming the 'total suspended solids', or volume of other debris materials (like soil, plant material, dust and other particulate material) within the flood water, was 58 mg/L.

"The following day Queensland Government environment officials were onsite undertaking their own inspections and taking monitoring samples, which returned a result of 33mg/L.

"The maximum limit of total suspended solids allowed in a flood water release under the Port's Environmental Authority is 30 mg/L.

"Numerous inspections have been undertaken of the Caley Valley Wetlands since the unprecedented weather in February, confirming the Wetlands are thriving.

"Since 2017 Abbot Point Operations have been undertaking a three-year major infrastructure upgrade program to improve water and environmental management.

"More than \$15 million in upgrades are in the process of final execution in what will be a ~ \$50 million program in total. The works that have been completed to date have greatly assisted in retaining on site the large volume of rainfall that was received and improving water quality.

"These upgrades include: increasing the volume of water storage ponds, upgrade of a bund wall, including new piping and pump facilities, as well as our early works program on the redesign of remaining water management infrastructure at other release points.

"Further upgrades will be delivered by 2021 and will include: design and construction of an additional water storage pond, upgrades to all other release points, including upgrades to sumps, pumps, and piping."

ENDS

Note for editors:

- Total Suspended Solids (TSS) are solids in water that can be trapped by a filter. TSS can include a wide variety of material, such as silt, decaying plant and animal matter, industrial wastes, and sewage.