I am pleased to present Dampier Salt Limited’s 2012 sustainable development report.

Simon Trott
Managing director

The cornerstones of Dampier Salt Limited’s operating philosophy are environmental rigour, social responsibility and economic contribution. We believe that demonstrating these values not only supports and nurtures the communities in which we work, but also makes sound business sense. We are a dedicated, passionate business continually seeking to improve our performance through innovation, collaboration and working smarter.

Our many successes throughout 2012 are testament to the calibre of our workers, their ability to overcome challenges, their professionalism and work ethic. Whilst the continued strength of the Australian dollar, above average cyclone activity and soft market presented challenges, during 2012 the business set new production and sales records.

As always, safety remains our paramount consideration. A number of new safety initiatives where implemented during 2012, including the Nine Lifesaving Commitments programme designed to improve understanding of fatality risks and establishment of element champions and key safety standard committees to drive improvement in safety standards.

Dampier Salt also provided skin cancer screening and influenza vaccinations to employees, introduced periodic medical screenings to support workers in their fitness goals, and continued to develop our mental health program.

I firmly believe that our workplace journey to zero harm is an absolute priority and the most significant contribution that Dampier Salt, as a business, can make to sustainable development.

In terms of environmental performance, we maintained a very strong performance in 2012.

Among our many environmental stewardship projects was Rio Tinto’s entry in the East Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership - an international alliance of governments, conservation groups, academics and researchers dedicated to the protection of migratory birds - as its first corporate citizen.

Our four year $900,000 partnership with Edith Cowan University to research the ecosystems of our salt ponds entered its second year and saw the first thesis based on the research program delivered by student Neisha McLure.

On the people front, Dampier Salt works with four different Traditional Owner groups across our three sites and actively works to improve our cultural heritage management system and develop an ongoing robust relationship with Aboriginal people. We have the aspirational goal of achieving a proportion of Aboriginal employees equal to or greater than the proportion of Aboriginal people in each town/region in which we operate.

I note that in 2012, two of Dampier Salt’s Aboriginal trainees at Lake MacLeod were awarded with the Midwest and Gascoyne region Year 11 Indigenous Trainee of the Year Award and the Year 12 Vocational Most Outstanding Student Award (Dux) for 2012.

Dampier Salt is proud of how it deals with the communities in which it operates. We recognise that no single individual, group or organisation can do everything, which makes it all the more important to foster collaborative and mutually beneficial partnerships.

In 2012, Dampier Salt contributed to almost 60 different community initiatives across the Pilbara and Gascoyne regions with a focus on achieving positive results in the environment, education, health, arts and culture.

This report outlines some of our good work.

In closing I would like to thank Dampier Salt’s leadership team, and all of our employees and contractors for their efforts, professionalism and commitment during a challenging year.

I am proud of the way our team strives for stronger performance in all that it does.

I trust you will find this overview of our sustainable development performance in Western Australia informative and I welcome any feedback you may have.
Environment
Dampier Salt operates a health, safety, environment and quality (HSEQ) management system that underpins our business system and policies.

Dampier Salt’s HSEQ system comprises 17 elements and follows a continuous improvement cycle in such areas as air quality, water usage and quality, greenhouse gas emissions, mineral and non-mineral waste management and land-use stewardship. Verification and compliance to the system is through Rio Tinto audits and external ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 surveillance and certification audits.

We are proud of our environmental record and particularly with our entry into the East Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership, an international initiative to protect migratory birds, and our ongoing research with Edith Cowan University into the biodiversity of Lake MacLeod.

Health and safety
The health and safety of our employees is the top priority at Dampier Salt.

In 2012 we continued our relentless focus on fatality prevention with a number of initiatives including the adoption of the Nine Lifesaving Commitments programme (to improve understanding of fatality risks), the completion of a new fatality risk assessment baseline study; establishing critical control monitoring plans to monitor our priority risks, improving accountability for safety performance and robust compliance audits.

We also introduced improved shipping operation controls, further developed our mental health strategy, fine-tuned our wellness programme by encouraging workers to take an interest in their own fitness, and provided cancer screening and influenza vaccinations for our employees.

Dampier Salt believes that a key component in building and maintaining a sustainable business and community is to invest time and effort in the safety, health of its workforce.

Communities
Dampier Salt has an ongoing commitment to the communities in which it operates and our business demonstrates this through different strategies including work ready programmes, community investment and sponsorship and in-kind support.

In 2012, we donated more than $180,000 to support local sporting, educational, cultural, environmental, and community initiatives as well as involving ourselves in volunteer groups and emergency response organisations and supporting community organisations.

Production and people
Dampier Salt is justifiably proud of its people. In 2012 we worked hard to increase levels of workforce engagement and to support our people taking on new challenges.

As a company we have celebrated more than 40 years of salt producing operations in the Pilbara and Gascoyne regions.

Our workers have experienced natural disasters, such as cyclones and bushfires that threatened our business and our communities and met these challenges with perseverance, courage and reliability.

It is pleasing that two of our Aboriginal trainees were awarded with the Midwest and Gascoyne region Year 11 Indigenous Trainee of the Year Award and the Year 12 Vocational Most Outstanding Student Award (Dux) for 2012.

Salt continues to be an important global commodity. It is one of the basic raw materials for the chemical industry and is used across the chemical, automotive, construction, electronic, textile, water treatment, food and healthcare industries.

Global demand for salt was flat in 2012 and Dampier Salt’s operations were adversely affected by cyclones and rain during the first half of the year. But despite the conditions our business produced 10 million tonnes (an increase of 330,000 tonnes from 2011) and set new sales, monthly production and monthly shipping records.

As a business we contributed $30 million in total payments to government, mainly through income and payroll taxes.

We also celebrated some key milestones: including 40 years of continuous operation at our Dampier site and taking delivery of the first in a new generation of tug boats for use at our Cape Cuvier port which services our Lake MacLeod operations.

Further information
We welcome questions or feedback on this report. Please direct your feedback or queries to:
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Environment

Rehabilitation programme spreads seeds
Dampier Salt completed 10 Ha of rehabilitation across the business in 2012, predominantly in the last six month period.

Weather conditions were favourable for seed dispersal when the general works and production crews had a day out to hand seed and install signage. A full seed collection campaign is planned for October and November 2013.

Edith Cowan University Project – Northern Ponds research
Three successful field trips to Lake MacLeod’s Northern Ponds were carried out in 2012. Edith Cowan University researcher Neisha McLure completed the first thesis of the ECU research programme and Dampier Salt has included a copy in its professional library.

The programme has been successful predominantly in the data collection stages and will continue into 2013 with further field trips, data analysis and thesis assembly.

Shorebirds generate community and school interest
Dampier Salt held a five-day bird watch event across three sites – Dampier, Mairee Pool (in conjunction with Rio Tinto Iron Ore) and Port Hedland – from 12-16 October.

The community events were well attended with more than 30 people attending the Dampier site on the Saturday and more than 40 at Mairee Pool on the Sunday. The integration between Rio Tinto Iron Ore and Dampier Salt was a great example of two business units working together to support both the community and bird populations.

Dampier Salt site environmental advisors Brett Renton, Chris Parker, Chona Collins and Brent Tobin led interactive sessions with school groups on migratory birds in the lead up to World Migratory Bird Day on 12 May. Follow up sessions with PEAC and gifted student groups were conducted throughout 2012 during the migration period. These sessions were very well received and the schools have requested the advisors continue their informative visits in 2013.

ICARE cleans up Dampier Highway
Dampier operations conducted an ICARE (Industry and Community Against Rubbishing our Environment) event in 2012 and collected more than 3m³ of waste along the Dampier section of the Dampier-Karratha Hwy system.

The community group strengthened with five other industry and government sectors across the Shire of Roebourne taking part in the event.

New options considered for waste management and recycling
Dampier operations stopped use of its tyre disposal pit during 2012 and started a collection point for tyres to investigate options for recycling/reusing.

Other materials recycled from the site included conveyor belts, old fuel tanks and other sundry items from the laydown areas. These were donated to offsite communities and smaller industries, such as pastoralists and station owners, for reuse.

Dampier operations boost biodiversity: experts
Dampier Salt strives to ensure it has environmental practices in place to ensure its operations will ultimately have a positive environmental effect when it finally ceases salt production operations.

In August 2012, Dampier Salt became the first Rio Tinto business unit to pilot a new protocol for Net Positive Impact (NPI) review. The development of the NPI protocol is the result of a partnership that began in 2010 between the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and Rio Tinto.

The goal of the partnership was to establish a team of experts to develop a protocol for the NPI review of Rio Tinto operations, with the aim of achieving NPI on biodiversity after the closure of its operations.

Steve Rusbridge, Principal advisor environment for Dampier Salt said the company volunteered as the case study for the NPI pilot review because the mining of salt was significantly different from other mining operations and this would help to test the rigour of the review process.

Steve said the IUCN report’s findings acknowledge that Dampier Salt’s operational solar salt ponds had helped NPI through habitat creation. All three Dampier Salt sites are considered nationally and globally important sites for biodiversity, especially in view of infrastructure development disturbance to shorebird habitats in coastal areas along the East Asian flyways.
- The establishment of foundation practices under a biodiversity plan that embraces four key elements;

- In line with Rio Tinto’s broader values, Dampier Salt has means these species cannot make the thousands of kilometres round trip each year. Hence Dampier Salt’s "irreplaceable" IBAs along the flyway relating to Dampier Salt’s priority species, outline investment in these areas and secure the birds’ future;

- Achieving a measurable Net Positive Impact (NPI) as the ultimate goal.

Dampier Salt recognizes that biodiversity conservation and sustainable development projects generally require long timeframes. However, the company is also a potentially long-term stable partner for projects along the flyway and as a business has capacity to bring resources and project management skills that focus on delivering long term benefits to migratory bird species.

Environmental sustainability is a core focus of Dampier Salt’s operations and we strive to ensure compliance with environmental standards, licence conditions, legislation and other reporting activities.

Dampier Salt has implemented the Rio Tinto HSEQ management system, which is certified against the requirements of ISO 14001 and ISO 9001 – recognised international standards for environmental management systems.

As part of our water management programme in 2012 – and with the goal of reducing water use across our operations – we installed ten new Emflux electromagnetic flow metering systems across our Dampier site to provide sub-metering capabilities for the water monitoring system.

Western Australia’s Water Corporation helped fund and support the project to assist in water wise practices across the Pilbara with the aim to shift from expanding the water supply systems to making it more efficient and sustainable for all industries.

Six of Dampier Salt’s new meters were installed in areas that previously had no capability of monitoring water usage, and the remaining four meters replaced existing manual meters, reducing maintenance costs and man hours. The infrastructure used to support the metering was recycled from the site laydown yard, including several solar panel systems employed to ensure the meters are utilised with minimal environmental impact.

Installation of the meters has allowed us to develop a detailed site water balance from which we can make management decisions with the aim to reduce our use of fresh water.

As the Pilbara is a water-scarce environment, water awareness is key to ensuring the longevity of operations such as Dampier Salt, as well as maximising potential use of the saved water by other areas of our local community.

Improve occupational safety

Safety remains the number one priority for Dampier Salt and in 2012 the business continued its relentless focus on fatality prevention.

Dampier Salt remains committed to achieving a zero harm workplace and the focus in 2013 includes continuing our safety leadership development programme; increasing visible leadership through safety interactions, improved technologies for vehicles with the installation of in-vehicle monitoring systems and trials of fatigue monitoring equipment.

The business will also review and develop management plans for stockpiles and shipping operations.

While our relentless focus on preventing fatalities continued, the rise in overall injury rate from the previous year highlights that we can never be complacent about the safety and wellness of ourselves and our colleagues.

Health and safety

Some examples include:

- Health and wellness programme that involves biometric and health risk assessments that enable employees to measure and address their potential health risk factors.

- The introduction of periodic medical assessments, designed to support employees to maintain their fitness for work.

- Skin cancer screening and influenza vaccinations to all employees and contractors.

- Dampier Salt also continued to refine its mental health strategy. Key initiatives included the external review of occupational health and human resources policies and procedures for best practice and the development and trial of mental health awareness and practical training.

Dampier Salt has a comprehensive hygiene monitoring program for employees that includes dust, noise, welding fume, heat stress, water quality and alcohol and drug testing.

In 2012 we only recorded one case of occupational ill health – a incident of heat stress. We continued to provide initiatives encouraging workers to take an active interest in their health.

Health and safety
New initiative reduces safety risk with brine flumes
The ingenuity and problem-solving abilities of Dampier Salt’s workforce should be celebrated.

There were many practical examples of how individuals and teams innovated and improved to make their workplace safer and more efficient throughout 2012. Here is just one example:

Lake MacLeod employees had experienced a long-standing problem with opening and closing flumes that control brine flow into the operation’s North-East sump.

Lake MacLeod process superintendent Keith Hand said a solution was implemented along with ongoing repairs to levees damaged in the devastating floods of 2010/11.

“Flumes were developed to control the flow of brine into and out of the North-East Sump at Lake MacLeod,” Keith said. “But due to the build up of salt and other detritus on the flume boards, they were difficult to open or close easily.

“We previously used a system where someone attached a heavy lifting chain to a backhoe or excavator brought in especially for the job. There were obvious safety risks with this.

“What we now use, in a much quicker, more efficient and safer operation, is a light weight hydraulic port-a-pac device connected to a light vehicle 12 volt outlet.

“They are constructed of stainless steel gates with hydraulic rams, bolted onto HDPE pipe.”

Keith said the new system was safer for those carrying out the operation and reduced the risks associated with strains from carrying heavy chains, working in close proximity to heavy machinery and slips and trips on uneven ground.

It also had great potential to create savings for the business by reducing the need to spend $1500-$2300 a day for the services of a backhoe or excavator.

Communities
Dampier Salt recognises that supporting the communities in which it operates is a key part of running a successful business.

The majority of Dampier Salt’s workforce is residential. Our employees work and live in our host communities of Port Hedland, Karratha / Dampier and Carnarvon and our community relationships are based on mutual respect, openness, trust, active partnership and long term commitment.

Dampier Salt’s community relations and investment strategy focuses on a number of different strategies including work ready programmes, community investment and sponsorship, and in-kind support.

We regularly meet community groups to better understand their interests and priorities. Our employees are often our best community ambassadors as they actively engage in a variety of local community activities, forums and advisory groups.

These include: Road Wise Committee; Chamber of Commerce; local shire; work ready programmes; the Police and Citizens Youth Club; Sea Rescue and numerous other community groups and sporting associations.

Through Rio Tinto’s community investment programmes Dampier Salt supports employees’ in-kind community contribution via Dollar for Doers – where employees who have volunteered 50 hours or more in the 12 months prior can apply for a $500 grant for the organisation they completed the volunteer for; or Team Rio Tinto – where employees form a team of 20 or more colleagues eligible for support. Support comes in many forms, such as matched funds, paid event registration or transport.

Dampier Salt’s other forms of community investment include:
- A fixed annual sponsorship budget at each site for distribution by each of its operations to eligible causes in the host community;
- An annual community grant which is open to our host communities;
- A partnering agreement with third parties to achieve a mutually beneficial outcome; and
- In-kind support of services or goods.

Our communities’ policy has a key focus on positive health, culture, community and environment outcomes.
Highlights of 2012

Dampier Salt continues to contribute $365,000 annually to the Burrup Conservation Agreement, a 10-year partnering agreement between Rio Tinto Iron Ore, Dampier Salt and the Federal Government aimed at the preservation of the Burrup Peninsula where ancient Aboriginal rock art and significant Aboriginal cultural heritage sites are located.

We supported the Polly Farmer Foundation in Carnarvon with Rio Tinto Iron Ore and government agencies. Dampier Salt contributes $75,000 annually to this programme to help Aboriginal secondary school students complete year 12 and either attend tertiary education or pursue an apprenticeship.

Dampier Salt’s $50,000 Annual Community Grant Scheme was split between funding support for the St John Ambulance Service in Port Hedland and Carnarvon and helping to support the development of palliative care services at Roebourne District Hospital.

All sites contributed significant in-kind support to their local communities including the loan of marquees for community events; donating a bus to a local men’s group; community BBQs; cruise ship visits (one tours and information brochures) and first aid kits.

Our Lake MacLeod operation participated in the whole of catchment northern pools monitoring programme with local pastoralists and environmental agencies.

All sites worked towards developing and implementing a site specific cultural awareness programme for employees.

We worked towards achieving a level of Aboriginal employment at each site at least the equal to the proportion of Aboriginals living in the local community and in actively participating in the Work Ready programme in conjunction with Rio Tinto Iron Ore.

Partnering agreements

Dampier Salt has entered into two key agreements with multiple third parties in order to deliver mutually beneficial outcomes for all stakeholders.

Partnering agreements are usually longer term agreements whereby stakeholders who are partnering have fully understood the objectives, goals, expectations and deliverables of the agreement. The agreements should have measurable KPI’s that are monitored and analysed to ensure they are delivering what the stakeholders have laid out in the agreement.

While partnering with third parties has its own set of risks when it works it can deliver amazing outcomes.

In-kind support can be delivered in a number of ways that support the community.

It can be provided as services such as grading fire breaks or roads or providing an extra pair of hands to help out; or it can be delivered as products such as the provision of events tents, food and water, giveaway items or vehicles we no longer use.

Working with Traditional Owners

Dampier Salt works with four different Traditional Owner groups across three sites. Through this engagement we seek open and transparent communication and consultation to actively work towards continuous improvement of our cultural heritage management system.

As part of this process Dampier Salt also participates in developing a business Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) each year as part of Rio Tinto’s overall RAP.

The business’s key focus areas in 2012 were:

- Developing and implementing cultural heritage awareness programmes across each site;
- Achieving a proportion of Indigenous employees equal to or exceeding the proportion of Aboriginal people in each town/region where we operate;
- Working to increase the number of Aboriginal employees in management positions;
- Formalising a programme with each of the local high schools to take VET and work experience students into the business each year;
- Actively seeking to employ local Aboriginal people at each site;
- Participating in the Work Ready programme in conjunction with Rio Tinto Iron Ore; and
- Our ongoing commitment to the Burrup Conservation Agreement, a cross-industry collaborative fund between Rio Tinto Iron Ore, Dampier Salt and the Commonwealth Government. The primary purpose of the Burrup Conservation Agreement is for the conservation and preservation of the Burrup Peninsula where ancient Aboriginal rock art and significant Aboriginal cultural heritage sites are located.

Community partnership fixes Carnarvon traffic black spot

Two years of talks between Dampier Salt, the Shire of Carnarvon and Main Roads WA resulted in the installation of a level crossing to improve safety at a traffic ‘black spot’ near Lake MacLeod in 2012.

Dampier Salt General manager operations Jim Cooper said the business had long sought a solution to the safety hazard posed by the intersection of a public road with the mine’s dry salt haul road about 60km north of Carnarvon.

For the life of our operation, there has been a dangerous intersection where the public cross our dry salt haul road,” Jim said.

“Stop signs have been in place, but over the years there have been several incidents and a number of close calls when public traffic has crossed the intersection in front of our haul trucks.

“Our very real fear was that the hazard posed by this intersection was an accident waiting to happen. A collision between a haul truck and a light vehicle could easily result in a fatality – something nobody wants to happen.”

Jim said the negotiation process with the Shire and Main Roads WA had taken more than two years to achieve an agreed solution of installing a railway crossing style warning system which flashes lights when haul trucks approach the intersection.

“The safety of our workers is a priority to us as a business,” he said. “But equally important is the safety of others – particularly members of the public that cross our lease.

“By working with the State and local government we have achieved a result that benefits everyone.”

Donated bus helps at risk children in Carnarvon

Rio Tinto and Dampier Salt donated a coaster bus to the Carnarvon Men’s Community Group in 2012 to boost their efforts to support and protect at risk youth in the Gascoyne town.

Rio Tinto General managers Mick Green (Marandoo) and Scott Wilkinson (Greater Paraburdoo) coordinated the sourcing, and provision of the bus from Paraburdoo and Dampier Salt Lake MacLeod manager Alan Perry undertook the on-going mechanical maintenance and servicing of the bus and to helping with fuel costs.

Alan said Dampier Salt was the single biggest employer in Carnarvon and most of the company’s workers were residents who understood local community issues – in particular those faced by many of the young Aboriginal people in the town.

“The Carnarvon Men’s Community Group aims to use the bus to take young people out to country and give them an opportunity to learn new skills, to interact in socially appropriate ways and to build self-esteem,” Alan said.

“The idea is that intervention like this can be life-changing and give young people the chance to make different and more positive life choices. We have already run successful Work Ready programmes in Carnarvon in 2011 and 2012 and are planning a programme for 2013.”

Alan said that sustainable development was a core value of Dampier Salt and empowering communities to help themselves was a key way to build local capacity.
Production
During 2012 we produced 10.0 million tonnes of salt, an increase of 330,000 tonnes above 2011 production and shipped of 9.66 million tonnes of salt.

Shipping was flat in comparison to 2011 with reduced freight rates increasing competition from suppliers who were previously too distant geographically to compete in the Asian seaborne market.

Our focus for 2013 is to meet our sales target of 9.9 million tonnes of salt and get back to production basics to ensure a reduction in cash costs allows our business to be more profitable.

Valuing diversity
Dampier Salt values the benefit of having a diverse workforce. Across our three operational sites, Dampier Salt employs 27 local Aborigines.

Two are trainees, three are apprentices, four are supervisors and 18 are operators and mechanical fitters. Two of our Aboriginal employees are also female.

In 2013, our focus will be on promoting and increasing sustainable Aboriginal employment in all roles across the business.

Economic performance
Salt continues to be an important global commodity. It is one of the basic raw materials for the chemical industry and is used across the chemical, automotive, construction, electronic, textile, water treatment, food and healthcare industries.

Global demand for salt was flat in 2012 and Dampier Salt felt the effects of a soft market. Our operations were also impacted by cyclones and rain during the first half of 2012, but despite the conditions, 2012 was a significant year for Dampier Salt with the business setting new production and sales records.

Our business sold 9.66 million tonnes (Mt) of salt beating the previous record which was set in 2011 with 9.61Mt.

Our Port Hedland operations achieved their own record by harvesting 3.77Mt, dry hauling 3.79Mt and shipping 3.64Mt. In June, Port Hedland achieved the highest monthly harvest of all our production sites (442,000 tonnes) and in July, Port Hedland achieved the highest monthly shipping rate (393,000 tonnes).

Highlights of 2012
Several variables contributed to fluctuating revenue over the past few years. This includes:
- the strength of the Australian dollar from 2010 to 2012;
- business interruption insurance for cyclone activity being paid in 2009; and

During 2012 we contributed $33.8 million in total payments to government, mainly through income and payroll taxes.

We also contributed more than $180,000 through our community investment programme in areas such as education, health, recreation, environment and cultural initiatives.

Two of our trainees at Lake MacLeod were awarded with the Midwest and Gascoyne region Year 11 Indigenous Trainee of the Year Award (Talsa Stratton) and the Year 12 Vocational Most Outstanding Student Award (Dux - Keanu Whitby) for 2012.

2012 breakdown:
- Wages and Salaries $94.9m
- Spend on materials, goods and services $31.6m
- Export revenue for Australia US$260m
- Royalty payments to WA Government $3.5m
- PAYG $25.3m
- Payroll Tax $4.2m
- Income Tax $0.8m

Production and people
Economic performance
Salt continues to be an important global commodity. It is one of the basic raw materials for the chemical industry and is used across the chemical, automotive, construction, electronic, textile, water treatment, food and healthcare industries.
Apprentices programme moves ‘in-house’

In April 2012, Dampier Salt significantly changed its apprenticeship system to bring the programme in-house and give apprentices greater access to leadership, guidance and employment benefits.

The change, associated with more intense supervision of individuals, has also improved safety outcomes.

Until 2012, Dampier Salt’s apprenticeship programme was coordinated by a group training organisation. This meant apprentices were not directly employed by Dampier Salt and not entitled to the full range of benefits enjoyed by Dampier Salt employees.

But from April 2012, Dampier Salt changed tack to directly employ the 17 apprentices in all stages of training across its three operational mine sites. Going forward all new apprentices will be Dampier Salt employees.

Caitlyn Johnston, a second year electrical apprentice at Dampier site, said she felt less like a “number” following the change in approach to apprentices.

“Before, the (apprentice) coordinator was rarely on site and you didn’t have anyone to assist you in your training,” Caitlyn said.

“Now, we have an apprentice advisor who we can contact and go to for help at any time. I feel we are getting better care and I have also had the opportunity to gain off site experience. The pay and benefits are also a huge improvement.”

Tobias Watt, a heavy mechanics apprentice based at Port Hedland said the change had affected his shifts and working hours for the better.

Super tug takes central berth at Carnarvon

Dampier Salt took delivery of a brand new tug boat in December as part of a planned $90 million upgrade of Rio Tinto’s tug and line boat fleet.

The MacLeod was amongst the first of seven new tugs constructed in the Uzmar Workboat and Tug Factory in Izmir, Turkey and is designed to improve the safety and efficiency of marine operations around port facilities at Dampier and Carnarvon.

Dampier Salt’s General manager operations Jim Cooper said the MacLeod would be based at Cape Cuvier about 70km north of Carnarvon.

“The MacLeod is a game changer for Dampier Salt,” Jim said. “It is bigger, stronger, more stable and able to work in a wider variety of conditions than previous tugs. Currently the biggest ships we can berth at Cape Cuvier are 75,000 metric tonnes. But with the MacLeod we will be able to berth ships that are up to 120,000 metric tonnes.

“The MacLeod is a significant part of a wider integrated plan to increase Dampier Salt’s capacity across operations and maintain our position as the world’s foremost producer of solar salt.”

Jim said the MacLeod had a 65 tonne bollard pull, compared to the combined 65 tonne bollard pull of the previous two tugs. The MacLeod also has a different hull shape, allowing for increased heel which increases stability in the water.

“Another significant improvement is the introduction of a variable pitch propeller which means we can control the height and angle of the propeller to suit different operating environments and work in a much safer and more efficient way,” he said.