

Dampier Salt Limited

Facts at a glance





About the Dampier Salt business

Rio Tinto, through its 68.4 per cent owned subsidiary, Dampier Salt Limited (DSL), is the world's largest salt exporter. Producing salt at three locations in Western Australia: Dampier, Port Hedland and Lake MacLeod. Dampier Salt is headquartered in Perth, Western Australia and its sales, marketing and logistics are performed in Singapore.

The Dampier operation was the first DSL site established in 1967 and is currently the largest producer of the three sites, with a capacity of 4.2 million tonnes per annum. The Port Hedland operation was acquired in 2001 and has a current production capacity of 3.2 million tonnes per annum. The Lake MacLeod site was acquired in 1978 and has the greatest potential for expansion of the three sites, with a current production capacity of 2.7 million tonnes per annum.

The total area under evaporation at DSL salt operations is 19,500 hectares, equivalent to 27,900 football fields. The three sites evaporate an average of 1.1 billion litres of water a day, enough to fill 18,000 domestic swimming pools.

Rio Tinto's share of salt production by DSL is over six million tonnes a year.

Sun and wind energy comprise around 99 per cent of the total energy required to grow, process and ship DSL salt. The sustainability strategy is founded on long-term operational viability and maximising the use of renewable energy sources.

The Lake MacLeod and Port Hedland operations have been harvesting salt for over 40 years. The demonstrated sustainability of DSL's approach indicates that operations will continue well beyond the next 40 years.



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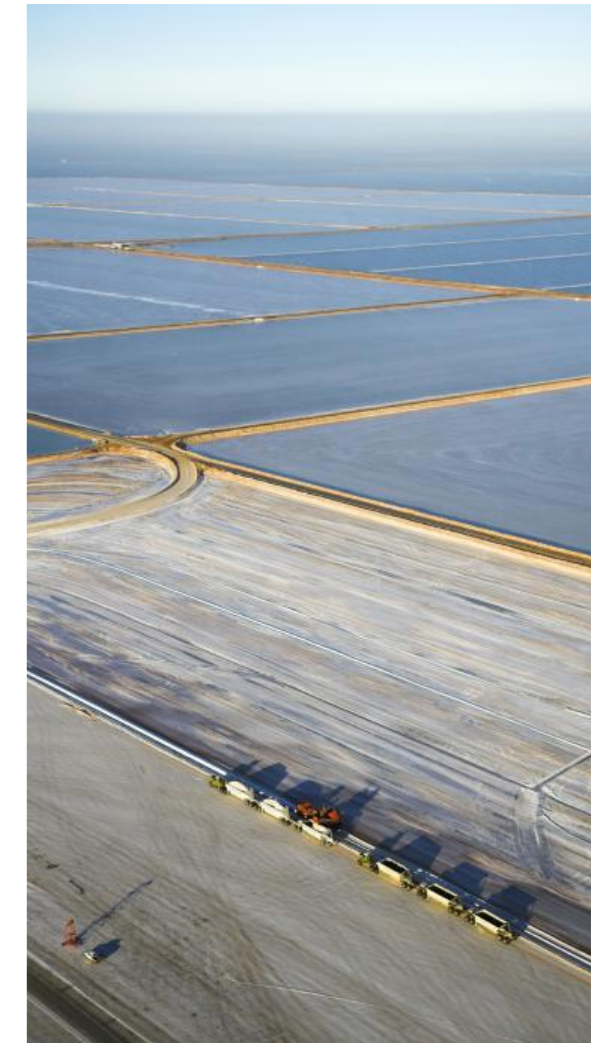
About the Dampier Salt operations

At the Dampier and Port Hedland operations (separated by around 200 kilometres), salt is produced by evaporation of seawater, by means of energy from the sun and assisted by the wind. Seawater flows through a series of concentration ponds in which the salinity is progressively increased. When this brine is saturated with sodium chloride, it is pumped into crystallising ponds where the sodium chloride will crystallise as a pure solid deposit. The solid material is then recovered, processed and shipped to customers. It takes about 50 million tonnes of seawater to produce one million tonnes of salt.

At the Lake MacLeod operation, salt is produced from a shallow aquifer of sea water that is naturally concentrated to ten times the original salt content, eliminating the need for the concentration ponds before the crystallising stage.

DSL's salt customers are in Asia and the Middle East. The majority are chemical companies who use salt as feedstock for the production of chlorine and caustic soda, together known as chlor-alkali production. These are used in the manufacture of many chemicals and downstream products including alumina and polyvinyl chloride (PVC). DSL salt products are also used as food salt and for general purposes including road de-icing.

The most abundant source of salt is the ocean, but it can also be produced from underground brines or from solid salt geological formations.





About Rio Tinto Diamonds & Minerals

Rio Tinto's Diamonds & Minerals portfolio consists of mines, refining and marketing operations and development projects across six sectors, spanning five continents. These businesses serve a range of industries but have a shared track record of creating new and profitable markets for their products. These core businesses are strong sector leaders in both cost and market position. They are underpinned by large resource bases with significant expansion potential.

- Rio Tinto Diamonds is one of the world's leading diamond producers, active in mining, sales and marketing.
- Rio Tinto Minerals is a world leader in borates, with mines, processing plants, commercial and research facilities.

- Dampier Salt is one of the world's largest producers of seaborne salt.
- Rio Tinto Iron & Titanium is an industry leader in high-grade titanium dioxide feedstocks.
- The Uranium business, made up of Energy Resources Australia and Rössing in Namibia.
- The Diamonds & Minerals portfolio also includes the Simandou iron ore project in Guinea.

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