

Press release

Tribunal decision protects Rio Tinto's integrated rail network in the Pilbara

30 June 2010

The Australian Competition Tribunal today handed down its determinations in response to the applications by Rio Tinto to review the decisions by the Federal Treasurer to declare the Hamersley and Robe River railway lines available for third party access under Part IIIA of the Trade Practices Act.

The Tribunal decided that a declaration should not be made with respect to the Hamersley line, finding that providing third-party access in this way would be "contrary to the public interest". The Hamersley line is the principal artery of Rio Tinto's integrated operations in the Pilbara, linking 10 of its 12 mines to the coast

The Tribunal also decided that the Robe River line should be declared, but only until 2018, rather than for 20 years as the applicants wished.

Sam Walsh, Rio Tinto chief executive - Iron Ore and Australia, said today: "We are very pleased that the access application over our major Pilbara railway line has been refused.

"We have always been strongly of the view that our integrated operations would be severely disrupted if we were required to allow third parties to operate trains on our rail system," he said.

"The Tribunal accepted our longstanding argument that rail flexibility was necessary to meet mine and port scheduling requirements and that access would 'cause significant delays in any expansion projects or innovations' which Rio Tinto wishes to undertake."

The Tribunal also found that the costs involved in providing access 'had the very real potential of dwarfing whatever benefits might exist from avoiding duplication of lines.'

The decision is a significant one, covering many complex issues, and Rio Tinto is now considering it in detail.

About Rio Tinto

Rio Tinto is a leading international mining group headquartered in the UK, combining Rio Tinto plc, a London and NYSE listed company, and Rio Tinto Limited, which is listed on the Australian Securities Exchange.

Rio Tinto's business is finding, mining, and processing mineral resources. Major products are aluminium, copper, diamonds, energy (coal and uranium), gold, industrial minerals (borax, titanium dioxide, salt, talc) and iron ore. Activities span the world but are strongly represented in Australia and North America with significant businesses in South America, Asia, Europe and southern Africa.

For further information, please contact:

Media Relations, London

Faeth Birch / Conor McClafferty / Clare Hunt

Office: +44 (0) 20 7781 1138

Mobile: +44 (0) 7920 041 003

Christina Mills

Office: +44 (0) 20 7781 1154

Mobile: +44 (0) 7825 275 605

Media Relations, Australia

Gervase Greene

Office: +61 (0) 8 9327 2975

Mobile: +61 (0) 408 098 572

David Luff

Office: +61 (0) 3 9283 3620

Mobile: +61 (0) 0419 850 205

Media Relations, Americas

Tony Shaffer

Office: +1 202 393 0266

Mobile: +1 202 256 3667

Media Relations, Canada

Stefano Bertolli

Office: +1 (0) 514 848 8151

Mobile: +1 (0) 514 945 1800

Investor Relations, London

Mark Shannon

Office: +44 (0) 20 7781 1178

Mobile: +44 (0) 7917 576597

David Ovington

Office: +44 (0) 20 7781 2051

Mobile: +44 (0) 7920 010 978

Investor Relations, Australia

Dave Skinner

Office: +61 (0) 3 9283 3628

Mobile: +61 (0) 408 335 309

Simon Ellinor

Office: +61 (0) 7 3361 4365

Mobile: +61 (0) 439 102 811

Investor Relations, North America

Jason Combes

Office: +1 (0) 801 204 2919

Mobile: +1 (0) 801 558 2645

Website: www.riotinto.com

Email: media.enquiries@riotinto.com / enquiries.mediaaustralia@riotinto.com

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