

MMG Rosebery: tailings spill at West Coast mine site blamed on ‘flow blockage’, investigations continue

A mining company has identified the cause of a tailings spill at its Rosebery site, which led to the release of waste materials into nearby waterways.



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It was a seemingly innocent text message, but it cost this young couple more than \$50,000 and left them struggling to pay for their daughter and their mortgage.

Chinese-owned mining company MMG says a tailings spill that occurred at its Rosebery mine site was caused by a flow blockage that led to the release of waste materials into nearby waterways.

The spill saw tailings enter Primrose Creek, with water run-off moving downstream into the Stitt River. The source of the release has been addressed, and the company has assured local residents that the health of Rosebery’s drinking water is unaffected.

An MMG spokeswoman said on Friday that the tailings spill was being “rectified and closely monitored”.

“The tailings material release occurred near the processing plant and was caused by a change of processing conditions that subsequently created a flow blockage and overrun,” she said.



“Clean-up is occurring in rough terrain and will continue in the area over the coming weeks, as will our own investigations and the (Environment Protection Authority’s). We recommend people avoid the area whilst clean-up operations are underway.

“Local residents have been engaged with and community members with further questions in relation to this event are encouraged to contact the Rosebery mine community line on 1800 ROS MMG.”

The EPA said MMG notified it of the spill and that an “unspecified quantity” of tailings materials had flowed into Primrose Creek.

“The company is taking steps to control the release and the EPA is investigating, therefore there is nothing more to add at this time,” an EPA spokeswoman said.

The federal government last month gave MMG environmental approvals to begin preliminary works for its controversial proposed tailings dam in the takayna/Tarkine rainforest.

Conservationists have launched a fierce campaign against the project, with 71 protesters having been arrested for trespass and for halting works at the site of the mooted facility since last year.



Bob Brown Foundation campaigners at the site of MMG's proposed tailings dam near Rosebery. Picture: Supplied

Bob Brown Foundation campaigner Scott Jordan said the latest tailings spill at MMG's Rosebery mine demonstrated that the company's plans for a new tailings dam had to be rejected in favour of a "safer, cleaner" paste fill option.

He also said an "independent" investigation into the tailings spill was needed.

"This is a clear example of why pumping 25m cubic metres of toxic tailings dam into takayna/Tarkine is unacceptable," Mr Jordan said.

"We are calling for an independent inquiry into this and previous spills given the clear failures of the EPA and Mineral Resources Tasmania to regulate this mine and tailings dams."