



pure kiwi mettle

#### NEW ZEALAND'S ALUMINIUM SMELTER

Tiwai Road, Invercargill, Southland, New Zealand  
Private Bag 90110, Invercargill 9840  
Courier / Delivery Address: 3 Spey Street, Invercargill  
+64-3-218-5999 [nzas.co.nz](http://nzas.co.nz)

15 October 2021

## MEDIA STATEMENT

### NZAS focusing remediation on specific areas of smelter site

New Zealand's Aluminium Smelter (NZAS) is focusing initial stages of its remediation planning on specific areas of the smelter site following the results of an independent report by global services company GHD.

Rio Tinto Aluminium Closure Readiness General Manager Nicole Atherton said, "We have commissioned this report to guide the important remediation work that needs to take place at NZAS.

"Given NZAS has been a heavy industrial site for more than 50 years, we expected that some areas would need remediation. This in depth analysis by GHD provides the critical information to do this work accurately and effectively, which includes addressing instances of contamination.

"We have shared this report with Ngāi Tahu and other key stakeholders and are releasing it to the wider community today so that people understand the report findings and the work we are doing as part of our commitment to remediate the site. We will keep the community updated as this work progresses."

#### Report findings

As part of the Detailed Site Investigation (DSI) undertaken by GHD samples were taken from 238 locations across the smelter site and surrounding area. Samples were taken at various depths at each location to understand the soil conditions and in a majority of cases these samples were taken from 10cm and 1m below the surface, consistent with global contamination sampling methods.

The DSI found:

- 1% of the soil samples did not meet the criteria for commercial industrial land use and 9% did not meet the criteria for recreational land use. The samples which did not meet the criteria were primarily taken from 10cm below ground level indicating that contamination is close to the surface and can be remediated. The areas these soil samples were taken from are not routine work areas and do not pose a risk to human health unless the soil is disturbed which would only occur under strict supervision and requires a special permit.

Operated by

**RioTinto**

New Zealand Aluminium Smelters Limited

- Sediment build-up in on-site drainage features exceed the relevant guidelines. Concrete barriers installed within the system prevent most of sediment from discharging to coastal areas, although exceedances for nickel and zinc were detected at the drain exit points. While these concentrations are considered unlikely to pose a risk to the coastal environment, GHD has recommended and NZAS will undertake further investigations of these areas to understand and manage the potential impacts.
- Groundwater testing results showed levels above guidelines for drinking water, however as no drinking water is drawn from areas where contamination was found, and there is no risk to human health.
- Samples taken from the centre of the smelter showed results for fluoride, aluminium and other metals that exceeded Environment Southland Rule 46 for groundwater, and these concentrations reduce as the samples move away from production areas. Further sampling is needed throughout various seasons to understand compliance against Rule 46 and the potential impact of these findings.
- All soil samples taken from outside the smelter's footprint across the wider Tiwai Peninsula met the criteria for both industrial and recreational land use.

"We are currently working with GHD and Environment Southland to finalise this sampling plan", says Ms. Atherton.

"We have committed to removing all Spent Cell Lining, managing waste and to remediating the site and will continue working closely with Ngāi Tahu, Environment Southland and the Ministry for the Environment.

"We recognise some waste has been handled poorly in the past and this was not acceptable. We are working to significantly improve our performance.

"This DSI report is just one step in a phased process and more information will be released as it becomes available.

"We understand these results might cause concern for people and would encourage anyone with further questions to contact us at [NZAS.Enquiries@riotinto.com](mailto:NZAS.Enquiries@riotinto.com)," says Ms Atherton.

**ENDS**

## **NZAS Contact:**

Jennifer Nolan, Director External Relations, Rio Tinto Aluminium New Zealand  
Phone: (021) 381-981