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Date set for fertiliser plant closure

Incitec Pivot Limited (IPL) announced today that it will permanently close its fertiliser manufacturing plant at Cockle Creek, south of Newcastle on 16 January 2009.

Closure of the 95-year-old plant will enable the site to be remediated and subsequently sold for non-industrial uses. The site will continue to be used for fertiliser distribution to meet requirements for the 2010 season or until stocks are depleted.

In April 2006, the company announced that it would close the manufacturing plant by September 2009 to facilitate remediation works.

"We will shut the plant earlier than originally anticipated because we have sufficient capacity at our other SSP plants," said Damian Ziebarth, IPL's Southern Australia Operations Manager.

The company this morning explained its plans to employees at Cockle Creek. The phosphate rock grinding mill at the company's Kooragang Island plant north of Newcastle will also be closed.

A total of 20 positions will be made redundant, and seven contractor and casual positions will be lost. "All affected employees will receive their applicable redundancy benefits in full, plus finance and career advice, retraining and professional outplacement assistance where possible," Mr Ziebarth said.

He paid tribute to the dedication of the Cockle Creek workers since the site's closure was announced two and a half years ago.

"They will close the plant proud in the knowledge that they have delivered perhaps the best plant operating consistency since it opened in 1913," he said. "The current safety performance of 1,859 days without a recordable injury is an even greater achievement."

In addition, Mr Ziebarth said the employees could feel satisfied that they and their company would leave a clean site available in time for other uses by the community.

To ensure the continuity of fertiliser supplies to NSW farmers, IPL is expanding its distribution centre at Kooragang Island by building new storage and loadout facilities at a cost of \$14 million.

This expansion will be completed by the time distribution from Cockle Creek ceases. The company has another major distribution centre at Port Kembla, as well as a large network of distributors around the State.

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