



Environmental Protection Authority

Annual Report 2019–20

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Australian Institute of Marine Science for use of the marine images.


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This report is available in alternative formats upon request.

Letter to the Minister

Hon. Stephen Dawson, MLC

Minister for Environment

In accordance with section 21 of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*, I submit for presentation to Parliament, the Annual Report of the Environmental Protection Authority for the year ended 30 June 2020.



Dr Tom Hatton, PSM, ATSE

Chair, Environmental Protection Authority

29 September 2020

Contents

Letter to the Minister	ii
-------------------------------	----

Message from the Chair	iv
-------------------------------	----

At a glance 2019–20	vi
----------------------------	----

About the EPA	1
----------------------	---

Role of the EPA	2
-----------------	---

The Authority	3
---------------	---

New Strategic Plan	5
--------------------	---

Environmental impact assessments	7
---	---

Referred proposals and schemes	8
--------------------------------	---

Assessed proposals	8
--------------------	---

Proposed subdivision in Midvale	8
---------------------------------	---

Bunbury Outer Ring Road	9
-------------------------	---

Pilbara renewable energy project	10
----------------------------------	----

METRONET	11
----------	----

Diversity in mining proposals	13
-------------------------------	----

Outcomes of appeals	14
---------------------	----

Strategic activities and advice	15
--	----

Engagement with public policy	16
-------------------------------	----

Continual improvement of policy framework	17
---	----

Greenhouse gas emissions guideline finalised	19
--	----

Protecting rock art on Murujuga	20
---------------------------------	----

Digital transformation	21
------------------------	----

Sharing environmental assessment data	22
---------------------------------------	----

Looking forward	23
------------------------	----

COVID-19 response	23
-------------------	----

Assessment of state significant projects	24
--	----

EPA self-reflection on learnings from reviews	24
---	----

Engagement with stakeholders	25
-------------------------------------	----

Site visits	26
-------------	----

EPA meetings	27
--------------	----

Collaborations	28
----------------	----

Stakeholder Reference Group	28
-----------------------------	----

Consultation	29
--------------	----

Appendices	31
-------------------	----

Appendix 1: Referrals received and levels of assessment	32
---	----

Appendix 2: Completed assessment reports	33
--	----

Appendix 3: Guidelines and procedures published or revised	36
--	----

Message from the Chair



Dr Tom Hatton | Chair, EPA

For almost 50 years, the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) has used its best endeavours to protect the Western Australian environment for present and future generations. In accordance with the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*, the EPA provides advice and recommendations to the Minister for Environment on environmental matters.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we are all living and working, but day-to-day, the EPA continues to deliver services. We play a key role in advising the Minister for Environment on the significance of the environmental impacts of development proposals and statutory planning schemes and will continue to do so.

Guidance on greenhouse gas emissions

On a local and global scale, this past year has seen environmental issues such as climate change and the impact of greenhouse gas emissions brought to the forefront of community interest and media coverage. The release of the EPA's guidelines to manage and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions followed an unprecedented level of public interest in the consultation process. More than 7,000 submissions and over 20 weeks of consultation helped shape our final guidance, which was released in April this year. Thank you to the people of Western Australia for taking part in the conversation on greenhouse gases. This guidance will help align the management of greenhouse gases in Western Australia with the science that says we need to get to net zero by 2050 to avoid the most serious of consequences, as well as the international and state policy that has endorsed this conclusion.

Digital innovations

The EPA has continued to drive advances in assessment standards and supporting environmental information systems. These innovations are recognised nationally and internationally, and I am immensely proud of the leadership and initiative we have shown in this domain. This leadership has seen pioneering advances in the capture of immense volumes of environmental data that would otherwise be lost to the future, and has attracted further investments from Commonwealth and Western Australia governments in environmental data curation and assessment systems aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of approvals.

Innovation in environmental assessment, information systems, and our policies and procedures is at the heart of our new *Strategic Plan 2019–2022*, as outlined on pages 5 and 6 of this report.



This year we have further progressed streamlining the environmental assessment process to make it more efficient and transparent. One element of this has been the State Government's ongoing commitment to Environment Online – a customer-focused, digital one-stop-shop for environmental assessment, approvals and compliance for industry and developers. Environment Online will improve the transparency and consistency of environmental assessments, and reduce the time taken for major projects to navigate joint State and Commonwealth assessment processes by six to 12 months.

We will continue to work with our stakeholders and innovation partners to ensure the EPA remains at the forefront of good practice in environmental assessment and advice.

Looking ahead

Looking ahead, the EPA welcomes the State Government's commitment to modernising the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* with amendments to the Act currently going through State Parliament.

Recent reviews of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) and its execution by the Commonwealth regulator highlight the need for strong governance, clear and effective procedures, and high accountability in matters relating to environmental approvals. The release of the Auditor General's report on the administration of referrals, assessments and approvals under the Commonwealth's EPBC Act and the Interim Report

of the Independent Review of the EPBC Act (the Samuel Review) has given us an opportunity to self-reflect. We share some of those reflections on page 24 of this report.

The EPA acknowledges the internationally recognised diversity and endemism of the south-western portion of Western Australia. This region is also one of the five biodiversity hotspots in the state. The south-west forests support mining, forestry and tourism and the communities that rely on these industries. These forests are also a source of recreation and water production for the broader Western Australian community. The EPA acknowledges the complexity involved in delivering balanced outcomes across all stakeholders that rely on the south-west forests, particularly under a changing climate and burning regimes. As such, we see merit in establishing a shared long-term vision for the management of the south-west forests.

Membership of the Authority

The membership of the EPA has undergone some changes this year. Elizabeth Carr stepped down from the Authority in October 2019 and I thank her for eight years of service. We welcomed Professor Fiona Haslam McKenzie, who has extensive experience in population and socio-economic change and regional economic development. More recently, after eight years as Deputy Chair, Robert Harvey has decided not to seek renewal of his appointment. I thank Robert for his dedicated service to the EPA over eight years.

I am completing my five-year appointment as Chair, having served the Authority for the past six years. I leave the EPA having relished the challenges and opportunities presented to me over this time. The departure of myself and Robert will provide opportunities for a new Chair and Deputy Chair. With growing pressure on the environment from development and increased community engagement in the EPA's process, our role is more challenging than ever and I trust the new and existing Authority members will steer it successfully into the future.

Next year will mark 50 years of the Western Australian EPA. This is a significant milestone worth recognising as the EPA continues the important task of preserving the Western Australian environment for future generations.

On behalf of the EPA, I am pleased to present this Annual Report to the Minister for Environment and the Western Australian Parliament.

Dr Tom Hatton, PSM, ATSE
Chair, Environmental Protection Authority

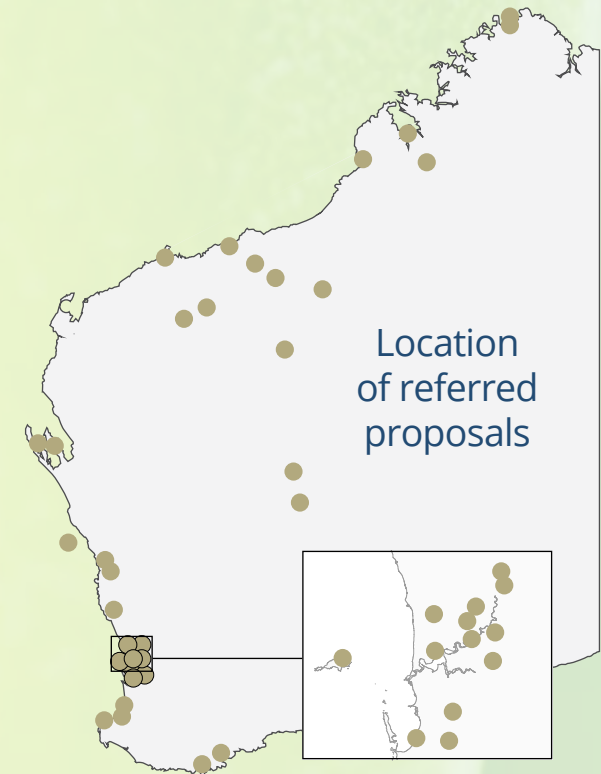
At a glance 2019–20

The EPA is an independent statutory authority that provides advice on environmental matters direct to the Western Australian Minister for Environment.

Began first year of *EPA Strategic Plan 2019–22*



45 development proposals and **149 schemes** referred to the EPA for a decision on whether formal assessment by the EPA is required.





Provided public advice for **9** referred proposals and **45** referred schemes.



Determined to formally assess **19** referred proposals.



Completed **40** formal assessments, which is the most since 2010–11.

This included assessment of one of the largest renewable energy projects in the world – the Asian Renewable Energy Hub, as well as two METRONET projects and the Bunbury Outer Ring Road Northern and Central Sections.



Published the **Environmental Factor Guideline – Greenhouse Gas Emissions**.



Met with the **EPA Stakeholder Reference Group** quarterly.



Published the **Policy Framework Manual**.

Provided submissions on key government initiatives:

the Native vegetation in Western Australia issues paper

the Climate change in Western Australia issues paper

Environmental Protection Act amendments

the review of the Biodiversity Offsets Framework



About the EPA



EPA members

Role of the EPA

The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) was established in 1971. The Authority comprises five members appointed by the Governor on the recommendation of the Minister for Environment.

The EPA is independent, in that we are not subject to direction by the Minister, and our advice to the Minister is public. This independence is fundamental to our ability to provide sound, robust and transparent advice.

The *Environmental Protection Act 1986* (**Environmental Protection Act**) governs the EPA's operations, stipulating the use of our best endeavours to protect the environment and to prevent, control and abate pollution and environmental harm. The Act defines the environment as "living things, their physical, biological and social surroundings, and interactions between all of these".

We are focused and innovative in our activities to ensure we are protecting the environment for present and future generations.

Our main functions are to:

- conduct environmental impact assessments
- facilitate the implementation of bilateral agreements
- prepare and seek approval for environmental protection policies
- prepare and publish guidelines for managing environmental impacts
- advise the Minister on environmental matters generally.

The Authority



Dr Tom Hatton, PSM, ATSE Chair

*Appointed as a member from
November 2014 to November 2015
and then appointed as the Chair.*

Dr Hatton has a Bachelor of Science (summa cum laude) and Master of Science in Natural Resources from Humboldt State University, and a doctorate from the College of Natural Resources at Utah State University. Following postdoctoral studies in mathematics at the University of New South Wales, he joined the CSIRO as an environmental scientist, working on the many water-related challenges facing Australia. Over a 25-year career at the CSIRO, he directed the Water for a Healthy Country Flagship and the Wealth from Oceans Flagship, Australia's largest water and marine research portfolios. In this role he was responsible for delivering research that directly underpinned the efficient and responsible development of Australia's natural resources, while ensuring the conservation of the environmental and social values. In 2014, Dr Hatton retired as CSIRO Group Executive for Energy, responsible for national facilities and capabilities in renewable and non-renewable energy, and mining research and development.

In 1999, Dr Hatton was awarded the inaugural WE Wood Award for scientific excellence in the field of salinity research, and the Utah State University Alumni Professional Achievement Award. In 2008, he received the CSIRO Chairman's Medal and the Australian Public Service Medal for his contributions to the management of Australia's water resources. Dr Hatton chaired the Western Australian Marine Parks and Reserves Authority from 2012 to 2015 and chaired the 2011 Australian State of the Environment Committee. He is an Adjunct Professor at the University of Western Australia (UWA) and serves on the board of the Western Australia Parks Foundation.

Dr Hatton was inducted as a fellow of the prestigious Australian Academy of Technology and Engineering in 2017 for his contributions to the development of technologies and their application to natural resource management and his outstanding leadership in the development of water, marine and energy technologies.



Mr Robert Harvey Deputy Chair

*Appointed as the Deputy Chair in
November 2012 and reappointed
in 2015.*

Mr Harvey has degrees in engineering and a Master in Business Administration from UWA. He began his career as an engineer at the former Water Authority, specialising in resource management, planning and policy. His last position at the Water Authority was as Director Water Resources Planning. He was Executive Director of the Department of Justice from 1999 to 2003, where he was responsible for community corrections, juvenile justice and correctional policy.

From 2003 to 2009, Mr Harvey was Pro Vice-Chancellor and Dean of Business and Law at Edith Cowan University. He was a member of the Water Corporation Board from 2007 to 2012. On behalf of the board, he convened a scientific panel to review the state's 50-year water plan – Water Forever. Mr Harvey was the Regional Director for the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust from 2013 to 2019. In 2010, Mr Harvey was appointed as a member of the Western Australian Planning Commission, remaining there until 2015.



Mr Glen McLeod

*Appointed as a member
in October 2013 and
reappointed in 2016.*

Mr McLeod is an environmental and town planning lawyer with more than 40 years' experience. He has held senior positions in major Australian, English and American law firms. In July 2012, he established his independent niche firm, Glen McLeod Legal, where he practises in the areas of environmental and town planning law. Mr McLeod is a council member of the International Bar Association's Section on Energy Environment Resources and Infrastructure and a member of the WA Law Society's Education, and Environment, Town Planning and Local Government committees.

Mr McLeod is an Adjunct Professor at Murdoch University where he teaches units in environmental and town planning law. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. He was the recipient of the 2016 WA Law Society's Lawyer of the Year Award. Mr McLeod is the General Editor of the Thomson Reuter national loose-leaf publication *Planning Law in Australia* and an editor of the *Local Government Law Journal*.



Dr Jenny Pope

*Appointed as a member in
November 2018.*

Dr Pope has more than 30 years' experience in environmental management and sustainability in Western Australia and internationally. Dr Pope began her career as an environmental process engineer in the water and the oil and gas industries. Dr Pope then established a consultancy in Perth which has been operating for 20 years. Dr Pope currently holds two international academic positions: Extra-ordinary Associate Professor in Environmental Management at North-West University in South Africa, and Fellow of the University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership in the UK.

Dr Pope holds a Bachelor of Engineering (Chemical) with first-class honours, a Graduate Diploma in Science (Biotechnology), a Postgraduate Certificate in Policy Studies (Ecologically Sustainable Development), and a PhD in Sustainability and Technology Policy. She is both a practitioner and an internationally-recognised scholar of impact assessment, focusing on environmental impact assessment, sustainability assessment and social impact assessment. She is an active member of the International Association for Impact Assessment and the Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand.



Professor Fiona Haslam McKenzie

*Appointed as a member in
October 2019.*

Prof. Haslam McKenzie is co-director and senior principal research fellow at UWA's Centre for Regional Development. Her current work examines the socio-economic impact of the Australian staple economies, particularly the resources sector, while her international work is focused on mining activities in Canada, Chile and South Africa and a Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade teaching program across nine African nations.

Prof. Haslam McKenzie has a diverse academic background, including a PhD in Political Geography from UWA, a Bachelor of Commerce, a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Philosophy from UWA. She has served on several government and private sector boards, including as chief investigator leading the Regional Economies – Enduring Community Value from Mining division of the Remote Economic Participation Co-operative Research Centre and as Director for the Housing and Urban Research Institute Western Australia. Prof. Haslam McKenzie has extensive experience in population and socio-economic change, mining and the oil and gas industries, housing, regional economic development and the analysis of remote, regional and urban socio-economic indicators.



New Strategic Plan

The *EPA Strategic Plan 2019–22* guides our focus for the next three years and centres on four pillars.

We have made significant progress 12 months into the *EPA Strategic Plan 2019–22*.

Improving the assessment and management of cumulative impacts

The EPA is pursuing an improved and clearer framework on cumulative impact assessment. We have begun work to identify the policy mechanisms and models to support improving the cumulative impacts process. The framework and toolkit will not be a 'one size fits all' mechanism, but a flexible and helpful guide for proponents and industry to bring greater clarity and efficiency to the consideration of cumulative impacts in the future.

Late last year, the EPA's submission to the State Government's proposed review of the Environmental Protection Act recommended that cumulative impacts be defined in the Act. This resulted in the draft Environmental Protection Act Amendment Bill 2020 including a new clause which recognised that "the effect of a proposal on the environment includes a reference to the cumulative effect of impacts of the proposal on the environment". It is likely that the *Environmental Protection Amendment Bill 2020* will be adopted by Parliament later this year and we are hopeful that this new recognition of cumulative impact is included in the final Bill.

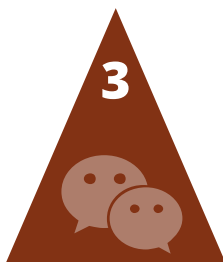


Being innovative in environmental information and digital environmental impact assessment

The EPA has made significant progress toward the delivery of digital innovation in environmental impact assessments.

We have worked with Commonwealth and State agencies to help secure full funding for the Digital Environmental Assessment Program (DEAP) from May 2020. The DEAP is a co-designed, co-developed program comprising two new and innovative developments being pioneered in Western Australia – Environment Online and the Biodiversity Information Office.

The EPA has recently fully incorporated both the Index of Biodiversity Surveys for Assessment (IBSA) and the Index of Marine Surveys for Assessment (IMSA) into the environmental assessment process. See pages 21 and 22 for more information.



Actively advising on the development of effective state environmental policies and plans

The *EPA Strategic Plan 2019–22* identified the need for us to show public leadership in policy matters of significance to environmental protection. In the past year we have provided submissions on key government initiatives, arguing for strong and effective environmental protection needs and opportunities. We provided submissions that have helped shape a range of key government initiatives, including:

- the Native vegetation in Western Australia issues paper
- the Climate change in Western Australia issues paper
- Environmental Protection Act amendments
- the review of the Biodiversity Offsets Framework.

After more than 20 weeks of consultation and 7,000 stakeholder submissions, we also published our *Environmental Factor Guideline – Greenhouse Gas Emissions* in April 2020. This guidance is being applied to some of the state's most significant greenhouse emitting projects to significantly reduce future net emissions.



Improving the soundness, robustness and transparency of advice through our assessments

Pillar Four identifies keeping current with advances in impact assessment frameworks and techniques as a priority.

As part of this renewed focus, the EPA has in the past year published a *Policy Framework Manual* and is supporting the State Government to update the existing Assessment Bilateral Agreement with the Commonwealth.

This year the EPA introduced the use of hyperlinks in some assessment reports to promote relevant science that was used in the environmental impact assessments.





Environmental impact assessments

One of the EPA's fundamental functions is to conduct environmental impact assessments of referred significant development proposals, strategic proposals and planning schemes, and to provide the outcome of those assessments to the Minister for Environment.

Referred proposals and schemes

During 2019–20, the EPA received the referral of 45 significant development proposals and 149 schemes.

During the year, the EPA made a determination on 38 referred development proposals: 19 required formal assessment and 19 did not require further assessment by the EPA. Of the 19 that did not require further assessment, we provided specific advice on environmental matters to the proponents of nine of these proposals.

The EPA made a determination that 156 schemes did not require further assessment by the EPA. We provided advice and recommendations on environmental factors to the responsible authority on the environmental issues raised by the scheme for 45 referred schemes.

Assessed proposals

During 2019–20, the EPA completed the formal assessment of 40 development proposals, and provided the assessment reports to the Minister for Environment. This was a 60 per cent increase from the previous year, and the most reports completed since 2010–11.

The EPA continues to see complexity and diversity in the proposals requiring formal assessment. The list of assessment reports completed in 2019–20 is provided in Appendix 2, and includes a residential subdivision in Midvale, a major road development near Bunbury, two METRONET projects, a large-scale renewable energy project, a waste project, a potash mine, a lithium mine, gold mines, iron ore mines and 24 changes to conditions of existing proposals.

Proposed subdivision in Midvale

The Subdivision of Lot 102 Farrall Road in Midvale is a proposed residential development, which retains a Bush Forever site and adjacent native vegetation in a 'conservation area'. The EPA assessed the proposal at the level of Assessment on Referral Information with a two-week public review of additional information. The assessment focused on the clearing of 2.9 hectares of native vegetation.

The proposal is likely to have an impact on the Shrublands and Woodlands of the eastern Swan Coastal Plain, which is a 'Matter of National Environmental Significance'. This is the same ecological community as the Shrublands and Woodlands of the eastern side of the Swan

Coastal Plain, listed as critically endangered in Western Australia. Through the assessment process, the proponent increased the area proposed for retention in the conservation area and decreased the development footprint.

The proposal area is zoned Urban in the Metropolitan Region Scheme and Residential Development in the City of Swan's Local Planning Scheme No. 17. In 1996, amendments to various planning Acts required all planning schemes and scheme amendments to rezone land to be referred to the EPA for consideration under Part IV of the Environmental Protection Act. This would allow the EPA to determine whether an environmental assessment was required.

The zoning of Lot 102 Farrall Road was initiated before 1996, so the EPA had not previously considered the proposed development of the site. Acknowledging this, the proponent referred the proposal to the EPA because of the proposed clearing of occurrences of a threatened ecological community listed as critically endangered by the Western Australian Minister for Environment and endangered under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

We completed our assessment of the [Subdivision of Lot 102 Farrall Road](#) in June 2020 (EPA Report 1683). We recommended the proposal may be implemented subject to conditions, which included a rehabilitation and vegetation management plan to maintain or restore the condition of the threatened ecological community and the adjacent Bush Forever site.

Environmental impact assessments

The *Planning and Development Act 2005* requires that schemes are referred to the EPA to determine if the scheme should be assessed. To help in our assessment of schemes in accordance with the Environmental Protection Act, and to provide guidance to the public, we are drafting Administrative Procedures and a Procedures Manual for the environmental impact assessment of schemes.



Bunbury Outer Ring Road

The Bunbury Outer Ring Road is a proposed highway linking the Forrest Highway and Bussell Highway, providing access to Bunbury Port and a bypass of Bunbury for inter-regional traffic. The proponent, Main Roads Western Australia, referred the proposal to the EPA in two sections – the Northern and Central Sections, and the Southern Section.

In June 2020, we completed our assessment of the [Northern and Central Sections](#) (EPA Report 1682). In assessing the proposal, we gave particular attention to potential impacts on conservation significant fauna and their habitat (including the western ringtail possum and black cockatoo) and to threatened and priority ecological communities.

The EPA acknowledged Main Roads' effort to modify the design of the proposal to minimise its environmental impacts. Mitigation measures included fauna crossings, drainage infrastructure to maintain hydrological regimes and water quality, and measures to manage weeds/disease and minimise traffic noise.

The EPA recommended environmental approval for the proposal, provided conditions were imposed that require Main Roads to:

- ensure that impacts to threatened fauna and their habitat are avoided and minimised, in particular the need to ensure that the local population of western ringtail possums is maintained
- maintain hydrological regimes to conservation significant aquatic fauna habitat, threatened ecological communities and significant wetlands
- minimise the impacts of noise during construction and operation
- acquire offsets to counterbalance the significant residual impacts from the proposal.

The EPA is currently assessing the Bunbury Outer Ring Road Southern Section.



Pilbara renewable energy project

In May 2020, the EPA recommended environmental approval for the [Asian Renewable Energy Hub](#) (EPA Report 1673) – one of the largest renewable energy projects in the world, subject to certain conditions.

The proposal involves the construction of up to 1,743 wind turbines, 2,000 megawatts of solar panels, above and below ground transmission cables and four subsea power cables, covering an onshore and offshore development envelope of 662,400 hectares. The Pilbara-based hub includes the clearing of 11,962 hectares of native vegetation.

Central to the EPA's consideration of the proposal was the potential for construction and ongoing operations to impact on migratory birds and threatened fauna species such as the bilby.

The wind turbines are 26 kilometres from Eighty Mile Beach and 13 kilometres from Mandora Marsh – two Ramsar-listed wetlands important to migratory birds.

The EPA considered that the potential impacts to migratory birds are manageable with recommended spacing of wind turbine rows to mitigate potential avifauna interaction, as well as monitoring of avifauna impacts from operation.

The EPA also recommended a condition for a staged fire management plan to monitor the potential impacts and benefits of a landscape-scale prescribed burn program to manage the existing wildfire regime. This includes management of habitat for the bilby (vulnerable) and avoidance of habitat for the black-footed rock-wallaby (endangered).

Further, the EPA recommended conditions requiring environmental management plans that ensures the proponent avoids, mitigates, and manages potential impacts of the proposal on terrestrial fauna, flora and vegetation, marine environmental quality, marine fauna and benthic communities and habitat. We also recommended a condition ensuring sustainable decommissioning and rehabilitation of the site once operations have ceased.



Environmental impact assessments

METRONET

METRONET continues to be one of the State Government's most significant and ambitious infrastructure projects. In last year's annual report, we reported on our assessment of the first METRONET project – the Yanchep Rail Extension Part 1 (Butler to Eglinton).

In 2019–20, the EPA considered four other METRONET projects:

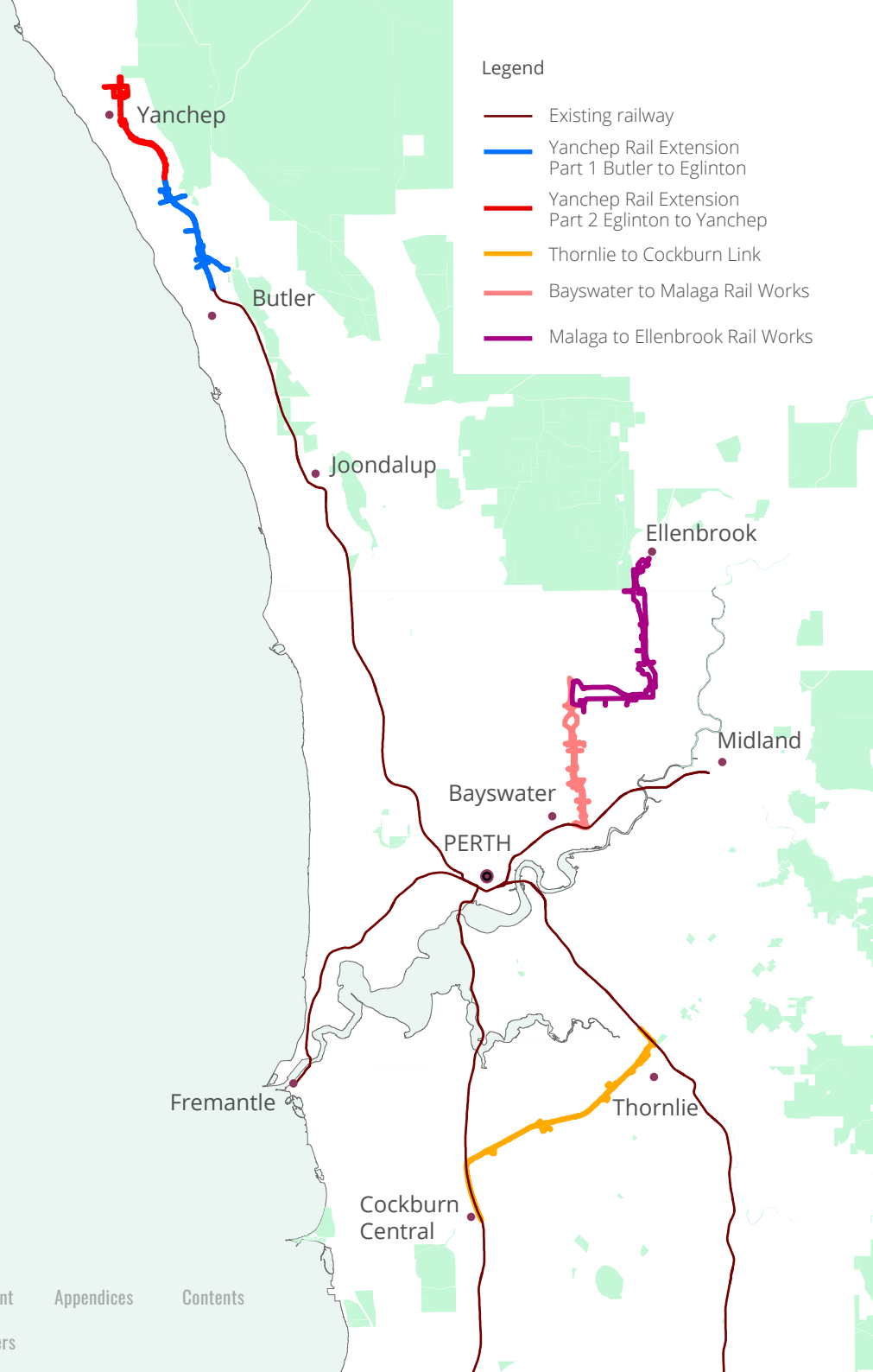
1. Thornlie-Cockburn Link – recommended for environmental approval in August 2019 (EPA Report 1646)
2. Yanchep Rail Extension Part 2 (Eglinton to Yanchep) – recommended for environmental approval in November 2019 (EPA Report 1656)
3. Bayswater to Malaga Rail Works – determined not to assess in December 2019
4. Malaga to Ellenbrook Rail Works – determined to assess at the level of Public Environmental Review in February 2020.

The proponent for these projects is the Public Transport Authority.

Thornlie-Cockburn Link

In recommending environmental approval for the [Thornlie-Cockburn Link](#), the EPA noted that although the new rail track would be within the existing rail corridor, the proposal would still impact on the environment. The recommended conditions included:

- actions to reduce noise levels for nearby residences
- monitoring and management of impacts to inland waters, flora and vegetation and terrestrial fauna
- offsets to counterbalance the significant residual impacts to Banksia woodlands, Bush Forever, black cockatoos, wetlands and grand spider orchid habitat.



Yanchep Rail Extension Part 2

The [Yanchep Rail Extension Part 2 \(Eglinton to Yanchep\)](#) proposal required the EPA to consider how best to maintain the ecological connection over the rail line to bushland, part of which is a Bush Forever site. We recommended approval of the proposal, subject to conditions related to:

- fragmentation of bushland
- management of flora and vegetation, terrestrial fauna and noise and vibration
- revegetation within cleared areas of Bush Forever not required for ongoing operations
- offsets to counterbalance the significant residual impacts to threatened and priority ecological communities, cockatoo foraging habitat and Bush Forever.

The conditions included a requirement for the Public Transport Authority to build at least three vegetated 'green' bridges over the train line to maintain the ecological connection through Ningana Bushland (a Bush Forever site) and allow wildlife to safely cross the tracks and maintain vegetation links.

Bayswater to Malaga Rail Works

The EPA determined not to assess the Bayswater to Malaga Rail Works proposal because the existing environment is highly modified and the extent and predicted environmental impacts are expected to be small scale and of a short duration.

Malaga to Ellenbrook Rail Works

In contrast, the Malaga to Ellenbrook Rail Works proposal will require formal EPA assessment and is to include a Public Environmental Review. Several preliminary environmental factors for the proposal are complex, with the potential to impact Banksia woodlands, a Bush Forever site, cockatoo foraging and potential breeding habitat, wetlands and nearby residences and recreational areas from noise and vibration. We expect to complete our assessment of the proposal in late 2020.





Diversity in mining proposals

The EPA's assessment of nine mining proposals in 2019–20 covered a range of minerals and projects across the state.

Lithium

The EPA assessed a proposed development for one of the largest lithium mining proposals in the world – the [Earl Grey Lithium Project](#) (EPA Report 1651). The EPA recommended the proponent, Covalent Lithium, prepare plans to manage potential impacts to the habitat for malleefowl and chuditch, and develop an offsets strategy for threatened flora and fauna to counterbalance the significant residual impacts of the proposal. The footprint for the project is 667 hectares, with 281 hectares within the abandoned Mt Holland gold mine and 386 hectares within native vegetation. The proponent proposes to rehabilitate parts of the abandoned Mt Holland gold mine that would be used for the project, which would otherwise not be readily rehabilitated.

Potash

In last year's annual report, the EPA noted the emergence of the potash industry in Western Australia. This year, we recommended a second large-scale potash proposal for environmental approval – the [Lake Disappointment Potash Project](#) (EPA Report 1658) – in Western Australia's Great Sandy Desert region.

We assessed the potential environmental impacts of the proposal, particularly on the night parrot, given its conservation status, and breeding waterbirds, given the importance of Lake Disappointment as a breeding site. We recommended the proponent, Reward Minerals, prepare management plans to avoid and minimise impacts to native fauna and vegetation.

The EPA is currently assessing three more potash proposals – the Lake Wells Potash Project, the Mackay Sulfate of Potash Project and the Lake Way Sulfate of Potash proposal.

Iron Ore

Iron ore proposals in the Pilbara continue to feature in the EPA's completed assessments each year. We recommended implementation, subject to conditions, of the proposed [Corunna Downs Project](#) (EPA Report 1665) near Marble Bar.

The EPA also recommended implementation, subject to conditions, for the revised proposals for existing operations at Mesa J, with the [Mesa H Proposal \(Revision to the Mesa J Iron Ore Development\)](#) (EPA Report 1668) and at Jimblebar, with the [Jimblebar Optimisation Project](#) (EPA Report 1663).

Gold

This year the EPA completed assessments of three gold mines – [St Ives Gold Mine](#) (EPA Report 1645), [Ravensthorpe Copper Gold Project](#) (EPA Report 1677) and [Warrawoona Gold Project](#) (EPA Report 1681).

St Ives Gold Mining Company looked beyond its 2018 mine life with a proposal to expand open-cut and underground mining operations on Lake Lefroy and adjacent land in the Goldfields region. The EPA noted that St Ives avoided environmental



impacts by identifying areas that would be excluded from mining within their development envelope that contained habitat for significant flora species and short-range endemic fauna. About half of the significant riparian vegetation within the development envelope would also be protected in the exclusion areas. We recommended the proposal may be implemented subject to conditions including development of environmental management plans for the protection of conservation significant flora, riparian vegetation, malleefowl and short-range endemic fauna.

The revived Ravensthorpe gold and copper mine proposal, in the Goldfields-Esperance region, was recommended for environmental approval subject to conditions. The proposal would be developed partially on disturbed land that has been historically mined, providing an opportunity to reduce the existing impacts associated with historic mines through rehabilitation. The EPA recommended the proponent, ACH Minerals, implement management plans to minimise the impacts to conservation significant fauna and flora and vegetation. We also recommended an offset strategy to counterbalance the impact from the proposed clearing of 167.5 hectares of conservation significant fauna habitat.

The Warrawoona project is for a new gold mine in the Pilbara region. One of the key points of the EPA's assessment was the impact the proposed clearing of up to 398 hectares of native vegetation would have on habitats for local fauna (such as bats, Pilbara olive pythons and northern quolls) and on flora and vegetation. We recommended the proponent, Calidus Resources, contribute to the Pilbara Environmental Offsets Fund to counterbalance significant residual impacts from the proposed clearing of fauna habitat. Our assessment also noted the future closure of the mine would be managed under the *Mining Act 1978*, while any long-term risks to local water quality would be regulated through the *Rights in Water and Irrigation Act 1914*.



Outcomes of appeals

During 2019–20, the Minister for Environment issued 35 Ministerial Statements for proposals that the EPA assessed. Of these proposals, nine received appeals against the EPA's assessment report. As a result of these appeals, four Ministerial Statements featured a significant change to the conditions we recommended (in each of these cases, the Minister allowed the appeal/s in part). The significant changes as a result of the appeals process included:

- modifying an existing condition to require the proponent to identify options for translocating abalone to suitable habitat outside of a development envelope
- inserting a new condition for the development of a disease hygiene management plan to address marri canker and other pathogens
- amending two existing conditions to include additional requirements for environmental management plans to incorporate and appropriately address third-party input
- amending an existing condition to include an additional environmental management plan objective to avoid and minimise impacts on ecological processes that are important to populations of breeding waterbirds.

Most of the conditions (95 per cent) provided in Ministerial Statements did not undergo significant change as a result of the appeals process.

Reviewing significant changes made during the appeals process allows for continual improvement of our recommendations for appropriate conditions.



Strategic activities and advice

Engagement with public policy

One point of focus in the *EPA Strategic Plan 2019–22* is to actively advise on the development of effective state environmental policies and plans.

During the year the State Government released issues papers on climate change and native vegetation for comment and called for submissions on amendments to the Environmental Protection Act. The EPA used these opportunities to actively engage in these important environmental policies and instruments.

State Climate Policy

In its submission on the climate change issues paper, the EPA welcomed the State Government's commitment to a new state climate policy and acknowledged that the ambitions to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 establish a clear foundation for the state. We also provided commentary on some fundamental considerations.

The EPA recognised the benefits of restoring and reinvigorating coordinated capability to forecast climate change at temporal and spatial scales and highlighted aspects of mitigating emissions where we considered the State Government could take a lead role or provide support. These included requiring transparency and reporting, encouraging and supporting innovation, developing regulatory expertise and carbon offsetting. Many of these issues were also reflected in our own *Environmental Factor Guideline – Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, released earlier this year.

Modernising the Environmental Protection Act

In our submission, the EPA recognised the importance of the Modernising the Environmental Protection Act initiative as a vital process in support of strong and effective environmental protection mechanisms.

The EPA promoted best-practice environmental protections, including the need to explicitly consider cumulative impacts, and supported innovation in the environmental impact assessment process to provide better clarity for proponents and stakeholders. In line with our Strategic Plan, we also emphasised the need to explore amendments that recognised the importance of alignment between the State and Commonwealth processes.

Native Vegetation State Policy

The EPA strongly supported the development of a new Native Vegetation State Policy. We acknowledged the complex policy and regulatory environment related to native vegetation management and articulated support for a clear and concise state policy that would provide a framework for improved consistency of management.

The EPA also recognised the strong links between a bioregional approach and better information tools to support native vegetation management. We further noted our strategic priorities around digital innovation and regionalised information mechanisms to enhance transparency, consistency and robustness of decision-making.

Biodiversity Offsets Framework

As a stakeholder, the EPA was extended an opportunity to provide input into the state's Biodiversity Offsets Framework review. We expressed our wish for the scope of the review to be broader to consider the objectives and content of the policy and guidelines in more detail, so that more contemporary internationally accepted offset principles could be incorporated. We also conveyed our view that on-ground management should be the preferred offset type in order to achieve better environmental outcomes.

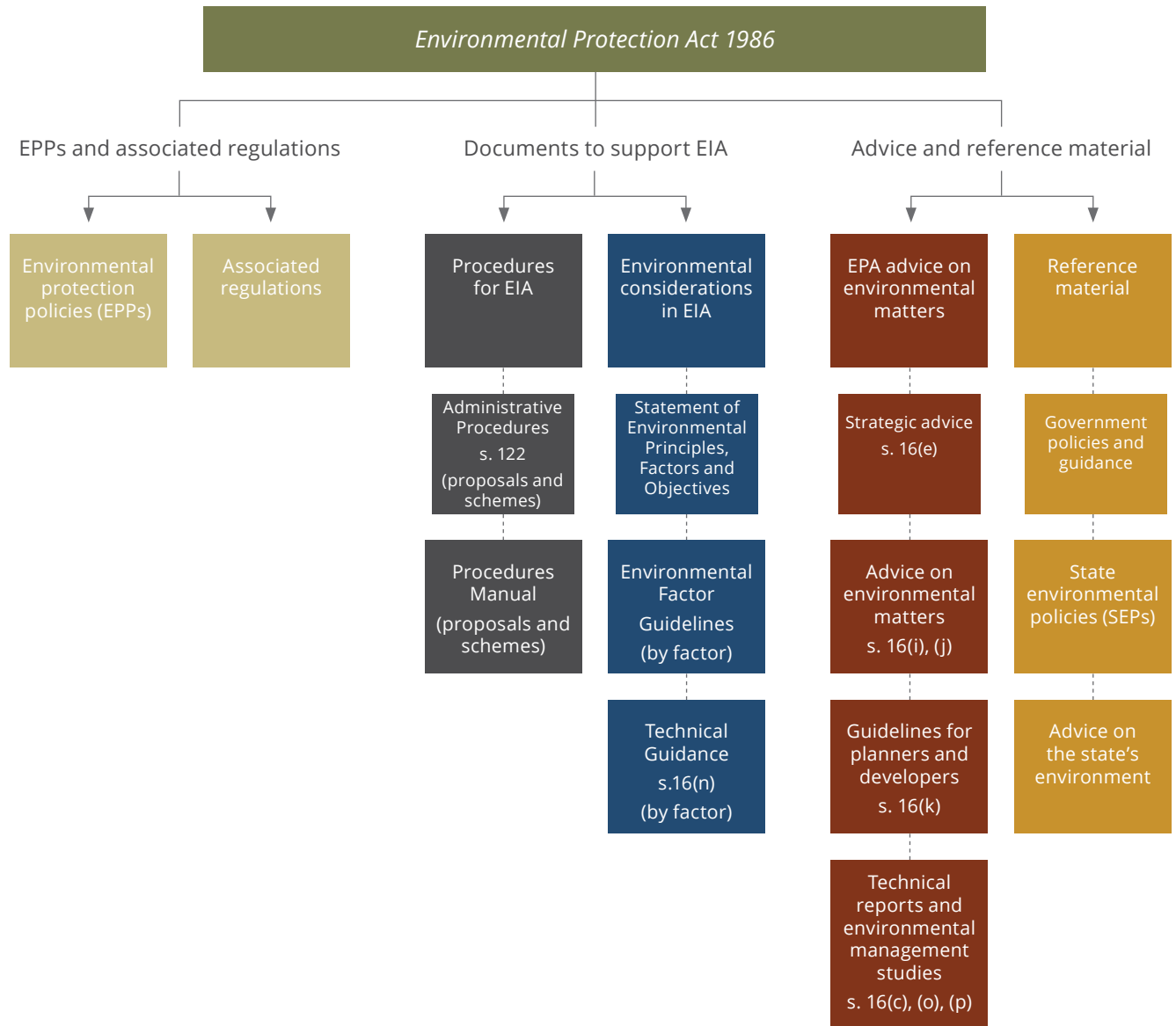
The EPA will continue to actively engage and provide advice on the development of public policy when appropriate. Over the next year the EPA will seek to engage closely with the review of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972* and a number of state planning policies.

Continual improvement of policy framework

In December 2016, the EPA established a new policy framework for environmental impact assessment guidelines and procedures to make it clearer and simpler for proponents, consultants and members of the community to understand the environmental impact assessment process. This new policy framework has strengthened the existing rigorous and well-regarded environmental assessment process.

In 2018, the EPA completed a review of our guidelines and procedures framework. Overall, the review found stakeholders supported the new framework, particularly noting the new procedures and guidelines are clearer and easier to navigate, and that they linked back to the Environmental Protection Act. Stakeholders also acknowledged improved transparency of the EPA's process.

To support consistent application of the framework, the EPA developed a [Policy Framework Manual](#) in January 2020. The manual sets out the EPA's policy framework (see figure on this page), key document types, and the process for developing, using and reviewing its policies. The manual applies to the development, approval, operation and review of all policies produced and maintained by the EPA.



Environmental Protection Policies

Environmental Protection Policies (EPPs) may be developed where the EPA considers it necessary or desirable for the protection of any portion of the environment, or for the prevention, control or abatement of pollution or environmental harm. There are currently four EPPs in force:

1. *Environmental Protection (Peel Inlet-Harvey Estuary) Policy 1992* – sets out the environmental water quality objectives and the means by which the environmental quality objectives are to be achieved and maintained.
2. *Environmental Protection (Goldfields Residential Areas) (Sulfur Dioxide) Policy and Regulations 2003* – sets limits and standards of sulfur dioxide for the Kalgoorlie-Boulder region.
3. *Environmental Protection (Kwinana) (Atmospheric Wastes) Policy 1999* and *Environmental Protection (Kwinana) (Atmospheric Wastes) Regulations 1992* – manages cumulative emissions of sulfur dioxide in the Kwinana industrial area.

A redetermination of industries emissions limits came into effect in July 2019.

4. *Environmental Protection (Western Swamp Tortoise Habitat) Policy 2011* – protects the habitat of the critically endangered fresh water tortoise.

In September 2019 the EPA began the statutory review of this EPP, which will be completed by December 2022.

Policies for review

All policies require periodic review and renewal, and the EPA has committed to an annual process that will determine policy priorities. This annual review will consider any relevant feedback received from stakeholders during the previous year, including the EPA's Stakeholder Reference Group. Priorities identified for 2020–21 include:

- Environmental Impact Assessment (Part IV Divisions 3 and 4) Administrative Procedures
- Environmental Impact Assessment (Part IV Divisions 3 and 4) Procedures Manual
- Technical Guidance – Environmental Impact Assessment of Marine Dredging Proposals.

Mine closure

Mine closure is a critical component of environmental management. Many mining proposals assessed by the EPA have rehabilitation and/or closure requirements. We will continue to assess mine closure rehabilitation as part of our environmental impact assessment process, where relevant, and may refer to the guidance for mine closure prepared by the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety, as part of this process.

The EPA looks forward to working with the Cooperative Research Centre for Transformation in Mining Economies (CRC TiME), which will undertake social, environmental, economic and technical research to enable Australia to transition to a prosperous and sustainable post-mining future.



Greenhouse gas emissions guideline finalised

One of the most high-profile and complex bodies of work the EPA has completed in the past 12 months is our greenhouse gas emissions guidance. The *Environmental Factor Guideline – Greenhouse Gas Emissions* was published in April after more than 20 weeks of consultation and almost 7,000 submissions from the community and industry.

A key foundation of our greenhouse gas emissions guidance is the requirement for proponents of projects emitting large volumes of greenhouse gases to articulate and report against emission reduction targets that demonstrate their contribution to the goal of reaching net-zero emissions by 2050.

Proponents will be required to demonstrate they are doing all that is reasonable and practical to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions.

This guidance will help align the management of greenhouse gases in Western Australia with the science that says we need to get to net zero by 2050 to avoid the most serious of consequences, as well as the international and state policy that has endorsed this conclusion.

The EPA's new guidance means companies operating in Western Australia that have recently made public commitments to reduce emissions to net zero by 2050 will have an opportunity to demonstrate their pathway to achieving this important goal.

The guidance will provide industry and community with certainty and a clear framework for the management of greenhouse gas emissions from future proposals.

The EPA is immensely proud of the extensive research and consultation in the preparation and release of this guidance. We listened to stakeholders and are gratified to see early industry uptake of the guidance during the environmental impact assessment process.

Future applications of the guidance will help to position Western Australia to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. Further policy work by the State Government will ensure that Western Australia is better placed to take advantage of any future boom in renewable energy and 'green jobs'.

The release of the greenhouse gas emissions guidance required an update of two other important EPA documents: *Environmental Factor Guideline – Air Quality* and *Statement of Environmental Principles, Factors and Objectives*.



Protecting rock art on Murujuga

Murujuga is 1,300 kilometres north of Perth in the Pilbara region of Western Australia. Murujuga is the traditional name for the Dampier Archipelago and the Burrup Peninsula and surrounds, and is home to one of the most significant, dense and diverse collections of petroglyphs (rock art) in the world. The rock art documents the transition of an arid maritime cultural landscape through time. In February 2020, the Murujuga Cultural Landscape was added by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to Australia's World Heritage Tentative List. The State Government is working with the Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation (representing the Traditional Owners and custodians of Murujuga) to undertake the next step in the World Heritage listing process.

The Burrup Strategic Industrial Area is on Murujuga and supports state significant and strategic economically important industry associated with Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) production and chemical manufacture. During 2019–20, the EPA

completed two assessments of proposals on Murujuga – Woodside Energy Ltd's Scarborough Project Near Shore Component and Yara Pilbara Nitrates Pty Ltd's Technical Ammonium Nitrate Production Facility.

The EPA also substantially progressed two formal assessments for proposals on the Burrup Peninsula associated with Woodside Energy Ltd's LNG production at the existing Karratha Gas Plant and the Perdaman Chemicals and Fertilisers Pty Ltd's Perdaman Urea Project. In addition, the EPA has substantially progressed the assessment of Woodside Energy Ltd's Browse to North West Shelf Development Project, to be developed as an offshore resource to supply the ongoing operation of the Karratha Gas Plant. The EPA expects these formal assessments will be completed in 2020–21.

In undertaking the assessment of proposals located on Murujuga, the EPA notes the high level of public concern relating to the potential effects on culturally significant rock art from the cumulative impacts of airborne industrial emissions.

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER), in partnership with the Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation, is overseeing the development and implementation of a world best-practice rock art monitoring program to determine whether the rock art is being subjected to accelerated change. In addition, DWER is commissioning a study of the cumulative impacts of air emissions within the Murujuga airshed. The cumulative impact study will consider air emissions from existing and proposed future industries, shipping and aggregate sources within the Murujuga airshed and includes the population centres of Dampier and Karratha and the surrounding areas. The EPA is fully engaged and committed to applying the findings and learnings from these studies to the proposals currently under assessment on Murujuga.

The [Murujuga Rock Art Strategy](#) highlights the immense cultural and spiritual significance the rock art has for Aboriginal people, and its significant state, national and international heritage value. Through robust and informed assessment the EPA will contribute to the protection of the rock art on Murujuga. Further, through the informed assessment of proposals on Murujuga, the Environmental Protection Act will contribute to the regulatory framework as an important component of the UNESCO World Heritage List nomination and potential listing through avoidance and mitigation of the impacts of development on the recognised heritage values of the area.



Digital transformation

In May 2020, the State and Commonwealth governments confirmed almost \$45 million of joint funding to deliver the Digital Environmental Assessment Program (DEAP) in Western Australia.

The announcement of this funding represented the culmination of many years' work by key players involved in Western Australia's environmental management. The EPA has worked with organisations represented on the Biodiversity Data Sharing Advisory Committee, including the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER), the Western Australian Biodiversity Science Institute (WABSI) and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) to help secure funding for the DEAP.

DEAP has two important new initiatives that will digitally transform the Western Australian environmental assessment process:

- Environment Online
- Biodiversity Information Office (BIO).

Environment Online will be a digital one-stop-shop for environmental assessments, approvals and compliance. It will improve transparency in the environmental assessment process and provide greater consistency in the way environmental approvals are assessed and conditioned. It will also better align both State and Commonwealth assessment processes, and internal environmental assessments (for example Part IV and Part V of the Environmental Protection Act) within the DWER.

The EPA's environmental assessment component of Environment Online is a collaboration between the State and Commonwealth governments that aims to make it easier for industry and the community to navigate and interact with environmental assessment processes in both jurisdictions. It will be the first process to be delivered as part of the Environment Online program, with a prototype available in late 2020 or early 2021 to demonstrate proof of concept and stimulate further conversations with key stakeholders to drive further innovation.

BIO builds on the excellent work of WABSI and the Western Australian Marine Science Institution (WAMSI) and will be delivered by the DBCA. It will provide a cost-effective system to capture, store, curate, analyse and make publicly available biodiversity data collected from throughout Western Australia. Making this data available to industry, the community and the EPA will facilitate better up-front decision-making, reduce duplication and cost, improve the confidence in environmental assessments and result in better environmental outcomes for Western Australia.

DEAP aims to deliver both Part IV assessments (under Environment Online) and BIO within the next two years. The EPA looks forward to working closely with key stakeholders to take full advantage of this opportunity to improve the way we do business during this digital transformation.

Sharing environmental assessment data

In last year's annual report, the EPA noted that the Index of Marine Surveys for Assessment (IMSA) was in the design phase. This year, we are excited to announce that IMSA was launched in March 2020.

Building on the success of its terrestrial equivalent – the Index of Biodiversity Surveys for Assessment (IBSA) which was launched in 2018 – IMSA requires electronic data to accompany any marine environmental survey report submitted to the EPA to support an assessment. IMSA captures and stores data and makes it free and easily discoverable online.

The portal provides access to marine survey reports, metadata and map layers as well as the processed data products and raw data packages which are stored at the Pawsey Supercomputing Centre.

IMSA will deliver more efficient assessments for proponents, a broader information base for decision-making by regulators and improved availability of environmental information for the community.

Survey data shared on IMSA is already being re-used in the assessment of new coastal developments and studies.

The IBSA program is continuing to improve, with the launch of the 'IBSA Submissions' portal in March 2020. IBSA Submissions allows web-based submission of IBSA data packages, entirely replacing the previous form and email-based system. Developed in response to stakeholder feedback, IBSA Submissions makes the IBSA process faster and more consistent for proponents, reduces IBSA-related overheads for regulators and improves the quantity and quality of IBSA data for users.

Data received through both IMSA and IBSA will feed directly into the Digital Environmental Assessments Program (DEAP) and be readily available to improve both the timeliness and consistency of future environmental assessments.

The EPA thanks and congratulates the Western Australian Biodiversity Science Institute (WABSI) and the Western Australian Marine Science Institution (WAMSI) for their role in the development, and for their ongoing support of the nation-leading IMSA and IBSA initiatives.



Looking forward

COVID-19 response

The EPA continues to operate during the extraordinary times of the COVID-19 pandemic and remains committed to meeting the needs of stakeholders and the wider community.

The EPA navigated the challenges by conducting our monthly meetings as well as meetings with proponents and the Stakeholder Reference Group using videoconferencing.

In support of the State Government's roadmap to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, the EPA is working with stakeholders and has consulted closely with proponents of major projects to prioritise the environmental impact assessment of these proposals. Other initiatives already underway to streamline the assessment process and improve efficiencies include amendments to the Environmental Protection Act, development of the Digital Environmental Assessment Program and updating the bilateral agreements with the Commonwealth.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we will continue to provide the Minister for Environment with robust, transparent and timely advice on development proposals, statutory planning schemes and other environmental matters.

Assessment of state significant projects

During the past financial year, the EPA has identified an increase in current and future large-scale resource and infrastructure projects with planned assessments under Part IV of the Environmental Protection Act.

In November 2019, the State Government announced it would provide additional funding to the EPA to establish a team of assessment professionals to specifically deal with state significant proposals. The EPA Services Strategic Assessment Branch was formed in January 2020 and operates with a focus on state significant proposals to expedite assessments supporting the Western Australian economy and to ensure our unique environment is protected.

During 2019–20, the EPA completed or substantially progressed a number of state significant proposals through the assessment process. The EPA completed resources assessments and reported on the BHP Billiton Iron Ore Pty Ltd Jimblebar Optimisation Project, Robe River Mining Co. Pty. Ltd. (trading as Rio Tinto) Mesa H Proposal and the Woodside Energy Ltd Scarborough Project Nearshore Component.

The EPA further completed a number of state significant infrastructure assessments and reported on the Perth metropolitan METRONET project, including the Yanchep Rail Extension Part 2 (Eglinton to Yanchep) and the Thornlie-Cockburn Link.

The EPA substantially commenced resource sector assessments including the Robe River Mining Co. Pty Ltd (trading as Rio Tinto) Greater Paraburdoo Iron Ore Hub Proposal and Brockman Syncline Proposal; and the Woodside Energy Ltd, Browse to North West Shelf Development Project and North West Shelf Extension Project. Further, the EPA has also substantially progressed the METRONET Malaga to Ellenbrook Rail Works. Many of these assessments are well placed to conclude during the next financial period.

During 2020–21, the EPA is planning to consider the first proposal under the BHP Billiton Iron Ore Pty Ltd Pilbara Expansion Strategic Proposal enacting expedited assessment and approval processes in the Pilbara region.

The EPA remains committed to ensuring state significant proposals are assessed in a rigorous and timely manner.

EPA self-reflection on learnings from reviews

The EPA has taken keen interest in the findings of the recent Auditor General's report on the Commonwealth's administration of referrals, assessments and approvals of controlled actions under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) and the interim report of the Independent Review of the EPBC Act (the Samuel Review). While the final Samuel Review report is pending, the findings of these reviews highlight the need for strong governance, clear and effective procedures, and high accountability in matters relating to environmental approvals.

We are using these reviews to identify if we can apply any learnings to build on the existing strengths of the state's environmental impact assessment process. It was pleasing to see the Commonwealth has recognised its partnership with Western Australia to develop the Digital Environmental Assessment Program (DEAP) as helping to underpin its future efficiency and effectiveness. The EPA also looks forward to the many benefits of this important initiative.

The Commonwealth will need to determine how best to respond to the findings of these reviews. The EPA also faced this challenge following the independent legal and governance review (the Quinlan Review) commissioned in 2016. We responded to that challenge with an intense and sustained program of innovation and improvement in the robustness, soundness and transparency of advice. Our stakeholders and peers have praised the resulting reforms to our assessment guidelines and procedures. Overall, we learnt that innovation in improving our business must be ongoing.

Engagement with stakeholders



As part of the EPA's ongoing commitment to stakeholder engagement, we conducted site visits and field trips, invited public submissions on assessments and regularly met with the Stakeholder Reference Group.

Site visits

Site visits are an opportunity for the EPA to gain a first-hand appreciation of the environmental setting and constraints of proposals, to listen to community concerns and to discuss aspects of proposals in the field with subject matter experts. Site visits are generally undertaken following the public review of a proponent's environmental review document. At this stage, with all the available technical and public information on hand, the EPA is well informed on important elements of the proposal in question and key environmental issues.

Environmental Protection Authority site visits 2019–20




































































Date	Destination	EPA participants
12 July 2019 30 July 2019	Yanchep Rail Extension Part 2, Eglinton to Yanchep, City of Wanneroo – <i>Public Transport Authority</i>	Tom Hatton Jenny Pope
1–2 August 2019	Lake Disappointment Potash Project, Shire of East Pilbara – <i>Reward Minerals Ltd</i>	Jenny Pope
7–9 August 2019	Asian Renewable Energy Hub, Shire of East Pilbara and Shire of Broome – <i>NW Interconnected Power Pty Ltd</i>	Jenny Pope
16 August 2019	Koolyanobbing Range F Deposit, 50 kilometres north-east of Southern Cross – <i>Yilgarn Iron Pty Ltd</i>	Tom Hatton Jenny Pope
19 August 2019	Mardie Project, 80 kilometres south-west of Karratha – <i>Mardie Minerals Pty Ltd</i>	Tom Hatton Jenny Pope
20 August 2019	Karratha Gas Plant, Burrup Peninsula – <i>Woodside Energy Ltd</i>	Robert Harvey Jenny Pope
29 August 2019	Tonkin Highway Modification Works – Guildford Road to Hepburn Avenue – <i>Commissioner of Main Roads</i>	Tom Hatton
21 October 2019	Wungong Demonstration Plots (Wungong Catchment Trial)	Tom Hatton
5 December 2019	Great Southern Landfill at Allawuna Farm, Great Southern Highway, St Ronans – <i>Alkina Holdings Pty Ltd</i>	Jenny Pope
6 February 2020	Malaga to Ellenbrook Rail Works – <i>Public Transport Authority</i>	Tom Hatton
26–27 February 2020	Warrawoona Gold Project, 25 kilometres south-east of Marble Bar – <i>Calidus Resources Ltd</i>	Jenny Pope
9 June 2020	Learmonth Pipeline Fabrication Facility – <i>Subsea 7 Australia Contracting Pty Ltd</i>	Tom Hatton Robert Harvey Jenny Pope Fiona McKenzie Glen McLeod

EPA meetings

The EPA met 14 times during 2019–20. At these meetings, the EPA met proponents of development projects and environmental experts to discuss assessments, received briefings from specialists on strategic environmental matters and continued updating governance procedures for the Authority.

The circumstances of COVID-19 meant meetings held in April, May and June 2020 were conducted through teleconference. Protocols were developed for the conduct of such EPA meetings by telephone and/or video conference, including legislative requirements, operational elements and conduct of proceedings to ensure there was a ‘meeting of minds’ of the members in relation to any decisions made.

Meetings of the Board

	Tom Hatton	Robert Harvey	Elizabeth Carr	Glen McLeod	Jenny Pope	Fiona Haslam McKenzie
18 July 2019					Apology	
15 August 2019						
19 September 2019						
24 October 2019						
21 November 2019		Apology				
12 December 2019						
19 December 2019						
23 January 2020						
20 February 2020						Apology
19 March 2020						
23 April 2020						
21 May 2020						
4 June 2020						
18 June 2020						
Participation	14	13	3	14	13	10

Elizabeth Carr concluded her term as a member of the EPA on 3 October 2019, and Fiona Haslam McKenzie began her term as a member on 11 October 2019.



Collaborations

Through strong partnerships with the Western Australian Marine Science Institution (WAMSI) and Western Australian Biodiversity Science Institute (WABSI), the EPA continued to build its digital data presence.

Both organisations have welcomed new Chairs to their boards in the past 12 months, with Dr Paul Vogel taking on the role at WAMSI and Dr Ian Cresswell appointed at WABSI.

The EPA's joint ventures with these two organisations are helping to deliver the Index of Marine Surveys for Assessments (IMSA) and Index of Biodiversity Surveys for Assessments (IBSA), which are transforming the way biodiversity and marine-based data is captured and shared.

The EPA recognises the excellent value both WAMSI and WABSI have brought to our work and we look forward to ongoing strong relationships and successful joint ventures with both organisations.

Stakeholder Reference Group

The EPA's Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG) invites representation from key external stakeholders and peak industry bodies. Members have the opportunity to provide input to our guidelines, processes and performance. This year the SRG made contributions that were considered in the development of the EPA's *Environmental Factor Guideline – Greenhouse Gas Emissions*.

During the year, the SRG met four times.

At 30 June 2020, core membership of the SRG comprised:

Conservation

- Conservation Council of WA
- Environmental Defenders Office
- World Wildlife Fund
- The Wilderness Society of WA
- Environmental Institute of Australia and New Zealand
- Environmental Consultants Association
- Natural Resources Management WA

Resources industry

- Association of Mining and Exploration Companies
- Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association
- Chamber of Commerce and Industry of WA
- Chamber of Minerals and Energy of WA

Other industry

- Urban Development Institute of Australia – WA Division
- WA Local Government Association
- Pastoralists and Graziers Association of WA
- WAFarmers

Consultation

Consultation hub

Providing opportunities for public participation is important for environmental impact assessment and developing sound environmental policies, guidelines and procedures in Western Australia. The EPA publishes documents open for public comment online at www.consultation.epa.wa.gov.au. Members of the public are encouraged to submit their comments through the consultation hub. The public and stakeholders can also use the hub to request they be notified of new items by email.

Number of comments received via the consultation hub:

Type of consultation	Number	Number of comments*
Proposals under assessment	20	524
Seven-day comment on referrals	44	4,826
EPA guidance	1	293

* Comments received via email or the post are not included.

Submissions on the Learmonth Pipeline and Shire of Exmouth LPS

The proposed Learmonth Pipeline Fabrication Facility by Subsea 7 Australia Contracting Pty Ltd is currently being assessed by the EPA at the level of Public Environmental Review. The proposal is to construct and operate an onshore pipeline bundle fabrication facility at Learmonth and includes launching of the pipeline bundles at Heron Point in the Exmouth Gulf, and towing of the pipeline bundles to Commonwealth waters (the proposal).

The EPA is also assessing the Shire of Exmouth Local Planning Scheme 4 Amendment 1, to rezone the land for the development of the Learmonth Pipeline Fabrication Facility from Rural and Foreshore Reserve to Special Use Zone No. 10 (the scheme amendment). The scheme amendment is being assessed in accordance with section 48A of the Environmental Protection Act.

The EPA decided to assess both the proposal and scheme amendment in recognition of the significant public interest and potential environmental impacts of the proposal, particularly on the Ningaloo Reef, Exmouth Gulf and World Heritage Area. We aligned the progression of both assessments as closely as possible to facilitate a robust, sound and transparent process and provide members of the public with a consistent and clear approach.

Both assessments were released for an eight-week public review period from 2 October 2019 to 30 November 2019. The scheme amendment received 56 submissions and the proposal received more than 56,000 submissions. The EPA will assess both the proposal and scheme amendment in light of the public submissions and other relevant information, including the request by the Minister to provide strategic advice (under s. 16e of the Environmental Protection Act) on the management of cumulative impacts on Exmouth Gulf.



Appendices



Appendix 1: Referrals received and levels of assessment

Proposals under section 38 of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*

Total proposals referred to the EPA under section 38	45
Determinations on level of assessment for proposals referred	38
Assess – Referral Information – no public review	3
Assess – Referral Information – with public review	9
Assess – Environmental Review – no public review	1
Assess – Public Environmental Review	6
Not Assessed – public advice given	9
Not Assessed – no advice given	10

The EPA no longer identifies whether or not an assessed proposal is managed under Part V of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* in the descriptor of the level of assessment.

Schemes and scheme amendments under section 48A of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*

Total schemes referred to the EPA under section 48A	149
Determinations on level of assessment for schemes referred	156
Scheme Assessed (Environmental Review)	0
Scheme incapable of being made environmentally acceptable	0
Not Assessed – public advice given	45
Not Assessed – no advice given	111



Appendix 2: Completed assessment reports

EPA assessment reports completed in 2019–20

Report number	Public Environmental Review	Proponent	Date approved
1645	St Ives Gold Mine: The Beyond 2018 Project	St Ives Gold Mining Company Pty Ltd	17 July 2019
1651	Earl Grey Lithium Project	Covalent Lithium Pty Ltd	7 October 2019
1656	Yanchep Rail Extension Part 2 – Eglinton to Yanchep	Public Transport Authority of Western Australia	18 November 2019
1658	Lake Disappointment Potash Project	Reward Minerals Ltd	2 December 2019
1668	Mesa H Proposal (Revision to Mesa J Iron Ore Development)	Robe River Mining Co. Pty Ltd	1 March 2020
1673	Asian Renewable Energy Hub	NW Interconnected Power Pty Ltd	23 April 2020
1677	Ravensthorpe Gold Project	ACH Minerals Pty Ltd	22 May 2020
Report number	Environmental Review (no public review)	Proponent	Date approved
1671	Sulphur Springs Zinc-Copper Project	Venturex Resources Ltd	24 Mar 2020
Report number	Referral Information (no public review)	Proponent	Date approved
1657	Tims Thicket Liquid Waste Facility	City of Mandurah	21 November 2019
1663	Jimblebar Optimisation Project	BHP Billiton Iron Ore Pty Ltd	19 December 2019
1665	Corunna Downs Project	Atlas Iron Pty Ltd	6 January 2020
Report number	Referral Information (with public review)	Proponent	Date approved
1646	Thornlie-Cockburn Link	Public Transport Authority of Western Australia	7 August 2019
1664	Scarborough Project Nearshore Component	Woodside Energy Ltd	23 December 2019
1681	Warrawoona Gold Project	Calidus Resources Ltd	17 June 2020
1682	Bunbury Outer Ring Road Northern and Central Sections	Commissioner for Main Roads Western Australia	24 June 2020
1683	Subdivision of Lot 102 Farrall Road, Midvale	Peet Stratton Pty Ltd	24 June 2020

Report number	Change to conditions – section 46 inquiry	Proponent	Date approved
1647	Barrambie Vanadium Project – inquiry under section 46 of the <i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i> to amend Ministerial Statement 911	Australian Titanium Pty Ltd	30 August 2019
1648	Technical Ammonium Nitrate Production Facility, Burrup Peninsula – inquiry under section 46 of the <i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i> to amend Ministerial Statement 870	Yara Pilbara Nitrates Pty Ltd	13 September 2019
1649	Gorgon Gas Development Revised and Expanded Proposal: Barrow Island Nature Reserve – inquiry under section 46 of the <i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i> to amend Ministerial Statement 800	Chevron Australia Pty Ltd	18 September 2019
1650	Boodarie Waste to Energy and Materials Recovery Facility, Port Hedland – inquiry under section 46 of the <i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i> to amend Ministerial Statement 935	New Energy Corporation Pty Ltd	25 September 2019
1652	Perth-Darwin National Highway (Swan Valley Section) – inquiry under section 46 of the <i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i> to amend Ministerial Statement 1036	Commissioner for Main Roads Western Australia	8 October 2019
1653	Wheatstone Development – Gas Processing, Export Facilities and Infrastructure – inquiry under section 46 of the <i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i> to amend Ministerial Statement 873	Chevron Australia Pty Ltd	4 November 2019
1654	Balla Balla Export Facilities – inquiry under section 46 of the <i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i> to amend Ministerial Statement 945	Forge Resources Swan Pty Ltd	12 November 2019
1655	Dongara Titanium Minerals Project – inquiry under section 46 of the <i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i> to amend Ministerial Statement 953	Tronox Management Pty Ltd	11 November 2019
1659	Resource Recovery Facility, Red Hill – inquiry under section 46 of the <i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i> to amend Ministerial Statement 976	Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council	4 December 2019
1660	Yilgarn Operations, Koolyanobbing Range F Deposit – inquiry under section 46 of the <i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i> to amend Ministerial Statement 1054	Yilgarn Iron Pty Ltd	10 December 2019
1661	Shine Iron Ore Project – inquiry under section 46 of the <i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i> to amend Ministerial Statement 940	Mount Gibson Mining Ltd	13 December 2019
1662	Additional Tunnel Kiln (Whitemans Brick Plant) & Fluoride Scrubber (Midland Brick Operations) – inquiry under section 46 of the <i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i> to amend Ministerial Statement 322	Midland Brick Company Pty Ltd	16 December 2019

Report number	Change to conditions – section 46 inquiry	Proponent	Date approved
1666	West Pilbara Iron Ore Project Stage 2 – Hardey Proposal – inquiry under section 46 of the <i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i> to amend Ministerial Statement 944	API Management Pty Ltd	13 January 2020
1667	Turee Syncline Iron Ore Project – inquiry under section 46 of the <i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i> to amend Ministerial Statement 947	Hamersley Iron Pty Ltd	20 February 2020
1669	Pilbara Iron Ore and Infrastructure Project: Port and North-South Railway (Stage A) – inquiry under section 46 of the <i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i> to amend Ministerial Statement 690	Fortescue Metals Group Ltd	18 March 2020
1670	Balla Balla Magnetite Mining Project – inquiry under section 46 of the <i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i> to amend Ministerial Statement 985	Forge Resources Swan Pty Ltd	20 March 2020
1672	Oakajee Deepwater Port – inquiry under section 46 of the <i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i> to amend Ministerial Statements 469, 774, 815 and 927	Minister for State Development	10 April 2020
1674	Albany Iron Ore Project – Southdown Magnetite Proposal – inquiry under section 46 of the <i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i> to amend Ministerial Statement 987	Grange Resources Ltd	19 May 2020
1675	Red Hill Waste Management Facility Extension – inquiry under section 46 of the <i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i> to amend Ministerial Statement 274	Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council	20 May 2020
1676	Gas Pipeline from Griffin Oilfield to Mainland Facility near Onslow – inquiry under section 46 of the <i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i> to amend Ministerial Statement 308	DBP Development Group Nominees Pty Ltd	21 May 2020
1678	Buckland Project – inquiry under section 46 of the <i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i> to amend Ministerial Statement 960	BC Pilbara Iron Ore Pty Ltd	27 May 2020
1679	Chlor-Alkali Project, Kemerton – inquiry under section 46 of the <i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i> to amend Ministerial Statement 066	Coogee Chlor Alkali Pty Ltd	3 June 2020
1680	Cape Preston East Iron Ore Export Facility – inquiry under section 46 of the <i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i> to amend Ministerial Statement 949	BC Pilbara Iron Ore Ltd	12 June 2020
1684	Roe Highway Extension – inquiry under section 46 of the <i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i> to amend Ministerial Statement 1008	Main Roads Western Australia	29 June 2020

Appendix 3: Guidelines and procedures published or revised

EPA guidelines and procedures published or revised in 2019–20

1. Procedures for environmental impact assessment
1a. Instructions and templates
<i>Instructions (and forms) for the preparation of data packages for the Index of Marine Surveys for Assessments (IMSA)</i> (March 2020)
<i>Instructions for the preparation of data packages for the Index of Biodiversity Surveys for Assessments (IBSA)</i> (updated March 2020)
1b. Procedures Manual
<i>Environmental Impact Assessment (Part IV Divisions 1 and 2) Procedures Manual</i> (updated March 2020)
2. Environmental Considerations in Environmental Impact Assessment
<i>Statement of Environmental Principles, Factors and Objectives</i> (updated April 2020)
2a. Factor Guideline – Air Theme
<i>Environmental Factor Guideline – Greenhouse Gas Emissions</i> (April 2020)
2c. Factor Guidelines and Technical Guidance – Air
<i>Environmental Factor Guideline – Air Quality</i> (updated April 2020)
3. Submissions by the EPA in line with Pillar 3 of the EPA Strategic Plan – Actively advising on the development of effective state environmental policies and plans
EPA submission to state climate change issues paper (November 2019)*
EPA submission to native vegetation issues paper (February 2020)*
EPA submission to <i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i> amendments consultation (Jan 2020)*

* Note that these dates reflect the submission date, not the date it was published on website

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