



What is environmental impact assessment?

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a universally-recognised, predictive tool for identifying and characterising the environmental impacts and risks associated with proposed development and ideally is applied at the early planning and design stages to increase the likelihood of both ecologically sustainable development and protection of the environment.

EIA allows the community and government to form a view about the environmental acceptability of development and what, if any, impact avoidance and risk reduction conditions should be applied.

In Western Australia EIA is conducted under Part IV of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* (the EP Act) and is overseen by the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA).

One of the EPA's key roles is to provide Government with advice on the environmental acceptability of significant development proposals and statutory planning schemes. Development proposals include minerals, energy and industrial proposals, as well as infrastructure such as ports, railways and pipelines. Planning schemes include both statutory planning schemes and their amendments.

Each year, several hundred new proposals and schemes are referred to the EPA. The EPA considers these referrals and decides whether or not they require formal environmental impact assessment and, if so, at what level.

The EPA's formal EIA process is undertaken in a systematic and transparent manner with opportunities for public comment. The proponent is required to produce documentation describing the proposal, the potential environmental impacts and risks and how these impacts would be managed. The proponent also needs to address matters of concern to government agencies and the public.

The EPA then considers the proponent's documentation, the public input, and advice from relevant experts and agencies to determine whether the proposal can be managed to meet the EPA's environmental objectives. The EPA also considers whether conditions should be placed on a proponent to ensure appropriate environmental management.

At the completion of the assessment, the EPA prepares a report and recommendations for the Minister for Environment. This report is also made publically available and is open for a public appeal period.



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Appeals are received by the Appeals Convenor (www.appealsconvenor.wa.gov.au) and determined by the Minister for Environment.

The Minister for Environment then considers the EPA's report and any public appeals before determining, in consultation with other Ministers or decision making authorities, whether the proposal should be allowed to proceed, and if so, under what conditions.

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