

## **Environmental Impact Assessment Processes Review**

### **Planning Group Meeting held on 5 May – 9.00-11.00 am**

#### **Notes of Meeting**

**Present:** Charlie Welker – Review Team (facilitator)  
Charles Johnstone - City of Wanneroo  
Steven Gill – Housing Industry Association  
Evan Jones – UDIA  
Sandra McLeish – Department of Planning and Infrastructure  
Shelley Shepherd – Environmental Consultants Association  
Mark Jeffries – EPASU  
Warren Tacey - EPASU

#### **1. TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR WORKING GROUP**

Accepted without amendment.

#### **2. REFERRAL OF SCHEMES**

The number of schemes being referred to EPA is increasing and a very small percentage of these schemes are actually assessed. The low number of assessments is a result of discussions with planning authorities resulting in modifications to schemes and inclusion of text addressing environmental issues. While there is a desire to reduce the number of referrals, this reduction would not necessary translate to an overall decrease in workload for the EPASU.

Also amendments to the Planning and Development Act 2005 would be required to reduce referral of schemes to EPA.

Less referrals to EPA would require planning authorities to make judgements as to whether matters require referral. The view was expressed that there is little environmental capability in DPI and most local authorities to exercise such judgement. DPI has very little desire to increase any such capacity. This was also seen as cost shifting from one part of Government to another.

**Action:** EPASU (Mark Jeffries) to liaise with other members of the Working Group and investigate the issues and merits associated with reducing referrals.

#### **3. ASSESSMENT OF SCHEMES (STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT)**

A number of schemes are referred to EPA without information to enable a meaningful assessment of the referral. One option that may be considered is aligning the structure planning and scheme processes to provide more information to EPA to enable it to make more informed judgements on whether to assess or not the scheme or not.

The development industry has a concern with such an alignment as structure planning requires a large financial commitment that would not be normally made in the absence of an appropriate zoning.

The application of strategic environmental assessment to earlier stages in the planning process would enable consideration of options but would need the outcome recognised in subsequent planning and EPA assessment processes.

Increased use of a risk-based approach was seen as desirable.

#### **4. PRE-1996 SCHEMES AND INDUSTRIAL LAND**

This issue may be addressed through strategic environmental assessment either under section 38 or 16(e) of the EP Act. Assessment under S.38 is strongly preferred as the outcomes of this process are subsequently recognised when considering future development proposals.

Further information on this issue was requested and Marianne Thompson for DPI will be invited to the next meeting to provide a briefing.

#### **5. MOU**

The current is well out of date. The preparation of a new MOU and associated schedules was agreed as being necessary.