



Environmental Protection Authority

# EPA Stakeholder Engagement Plan

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EPA, Western Australia

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### **More information**

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# Purpose

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The EPA Stakeholder Engagement Plan sets out the EPA's commitment to ongoing stakeholder engagement.

It also outlines proponent roles and responsibilities during environmental impact assessment (EIA).

The EPA has a legislative responsibility to use its best endeavours to protect the environment. The EPA has several statutory functions and powers to enable this, and the [EPA Strategic Plan 2023-2026](#) sets out the EPA's current priorities and goals for carrying out these out.

Stakeholder engagement is not an EPA statutory function, however the Authority considers it a key part of its operations because it ensures:

- up-to-date information about environmental protection from a range of sources
- those affected by and interested in environmental protection have a say in how this is achieved
- the EPA's work, priorities and requirements are effectively and inclusively communicated to proponents and the community
- the EPA's processes give regard to the Minister for Environment's [Statement of Expectation](#).

# Principles of stakeholder engagement

The EPA has many statutory functions in addition to EIA.

These stakeholder engagement principles apply to EIA and the EPA's other functions and encourage collaborative and transparent communication.

Providing effective, efficient and genuine opportunities for public participation in matters of environmental protection is an integral part of EPA environmental impact assessment and environmental protection policy development.

The EPA has adopted the following principles for engaging with stakeholders to:

- keep stakeholders informed about and promote the role of the EPA and its functions
- communicate our policies, guidance material and strategic advice and engage to seek views and feedback on substantial matters
- obtain expert insight and input to inform EPA advice and decision-making where appropriate
- provide elementary and accessible information on environmental impact assessments to relevant proponents and stakeholders
- build productive relationships with the community, industry and government to achieve better environmental outcomes
- meet regularly with decision-making authorities and research institutions
- implement creative and impactful modes of communication to engage and educate on environmental protection
- establish targeted subject matter expert panels to provide contemporary scientific and other advice to support our decision-making processes
- promote the understanding and use of Indigenous values and traditional knowledge in our environmental practices and policies
- be transparent and publish reasons for our EIA decisions and our strategic advice to government.

# Transparency and collaboration in EIA

Engagement during EIA is one of the tools the EPA encourages and uses to consider a proposal's significant impacts. Information on the types and level of engagement is available in the EPA's [Guidelines and Procedures](#).

The EIA procedures suite includes roles and responsibilities of proponents, the community and government agencies. The EPA's procedures and processes provide the framework for collaborative and transparent communication with proponents and other stakeholders, consistent with the Minister for Environment's [Statement of Expectation](#).

## **Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) stakeholder management**

The EP Act stipulates that the EPA must be provided with services to enable it to perform its functions. DWER officers support the EPA to implement EIA [Guidelines and Procedures](#) and engage with stakeholders as part of this statutory role.

DWER will support the EPA to manage proponent and other stakeholder roles and responsibilities. DWER has an escalation protocol which proponents can access when delays or requests for information in relation to the EPA's functions are considered unreasonable.

# Stakeholder roles and responsibilities in EIA

The EPA's procedures and processes describe EIA and provide a framework for collaborative and transparent communication.

## **Proponents**

The EPA expects that proponents should aim to:

- Consult with all stakeholders, including the EPA, other decision-making authorities, relevant government agencies and the relevant community as early as possible in the planning of their proposal, during the environmental review and assessment of their proposal, and, where necessary, during the life of the proposal
- Ensure that members of the wider public are provided with sufficient information relevant to the EIA of a proposal to make informed comment before the completion of the EPA's assessment report.

## **Community**

Members of the community are encouraged to:

- Participate in consultation by offering advice, identifying omitted relevant data and information, providing local knowledge and proposing alternatives
- Participate in strategic policy and planning as appropriate, since engagement at these earlier stages may influence the development and evaluation of future proposals
- Be informed of the administration and outcomes of EIA
- Take a responsible approach to opportunities for engagement in the EIA process, including being informed of objective information about the environmental issues.

# How we engage

The EPA aims to engage with all its stakeholders including the public, proponents, other government agencies, peak bodies, industry, non-government organisations and the community.

Specific forms of engagement change over time and in response to key and emerging needs.

This table sets out the EPA's current primary forms of engagement, consistent with the [EPA Strategic Plan 2023-2026](#):

EPA Consultation Hub	<p>Public participation is an integral part of EIA and developing sound environmental protection policies in Western Australia. The EPA publishes all documents open for public comment on its consultation hub at <a href="https://consultation.epa.wa.gov.au">https://consultation.epa.wa.gov.au</a> and prefers submissions via the hub.</p> <p>The EPA consultation hub is used for:</p> <p><u>Public comment on referred proposals</u></p> <p>The EPA publishes referrals to provide the public 7 days to comment on whether or not the EPA should assess a proposal and, if so, the level of assessment that should apply.</p> <p><u>Public environmental reviews</u></p> <p>The EPA will publish consultations relating to a proposal's environmental review document, additional information for public review, and some scoping documents.</p> <p>Consultation opportunities on <u>EPA policies, guidance and strategic advice</u> are published on the Consultation Hub.</p> <p><u>Responses to submissions</u> are published on the relevant proposal page of the EPA website.</p>
EPA meetings	<p>EPA meetings, at least every month, consider proposals, policies and strategic matters held. Proponents are invited to attend the primary meeting when EPA board members are considering the assessment at a critical stage. Subject matter experts and stakeholders are usually invited to discuss policy and strategic matters. Scientific Advisory Council speakers regularly attend to provide the EPA with strategic advice on key and emerging scientific environmental protection and assessment needs.</p>
Site visits	<p>Site visits are an opportunity for the EPA to gain firsthand appreciation of the environmental setting and constraints of a proposal, and to discuss aspects of proposals in the field with subject matter experts. Site visits are generally undertaken following consideration of a proponent's environmental review document.</p>



Stakeholder Reference Group	<p>The EPA has established a Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG) consisting of a diverse range of stakeholders. This helps inform EPA members of varied perspectives and builds constructive working relationships between the EPA and its stakeholders.</p> <p>The SRG meets quarterly. Its work is primarily forward looking, providing high level strategic advice on the policies, strategies and processes that frame the EPA's work. The role of the SRG is to debate concepts and new initiatives and then provide advice to the EPA.</p>
Scientific Advisory Council	<p>The EPA has established a Scientific Advisory Council with subject matter experts, corresponding to the EPA's themes for environmental factors and objectives which are Sea, Land, Water, Air, and People, as well as for environmental impact assessment and science. Experts provide contemporary scientific and other advice to support EPA decision-making processes.</p>
Proponent meetings during EIA	<p>The EPA Chair, in partnership with DWER's EPA Services officers, meets regularly with proponents. This helps ensure good environmental outcomes from their proposals and promotes efficient environmental impact assessments which target significant issues.</p>
Meeting other stakeholders during EIA	<p>The EPA, in partnership with EPA Services, engages with all relevant key stakeholders during assessments.</p>
EPA engagement with stakeholders by Chair and Deputy Chair	<p>The EPA Chair and Deputy Chair engage regularly with stakeholders by attending key meetings and forums, delivering presentations, keynote speeches, and participating in panel discussions and workshops.</p> <p>The EPA Chair and Deputy Chair also meet regularly with SRG members outside the quarterly SRG forum.</p>
EPA engagement across government agencies	<p>The EPA engages with relevant government agencies as part of government priority for the more efficient delivery of environmental outcomes. Working to understand the various regulatory roles helps ensure upfront certainty for environmental protection.</p>

Advisory committees	Under section 25 of the <i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i> , the EPA may also establish groups, committees, councils, and panels to assist the EPA in the performance of its functions and to address specific issues. Membership includes key stakeholders and subject matter experts.
DWER Aboriginal Water and Environmental Advisory Group	DWER supports the EPA's understanding and use of Indigenous values and traditional knowledge in its environmental practices and policies by engaging with members of the Aboriginal Water and Environmental Advisory Group (AWEAG).
EPA engagement with Traditional Owners	We will promote the understanding and use of Indigenous values and traditional knowledge in our environmental practises and policies.

# EPA engagement with proponents

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The EPA (and DWER's EPA Services directorate on behalf of the EPA) aims to proactively engage with proponents through EIA. Opportunities can include:

- pre-referral discussions and briefings with the EPA Chair and EPA Services staff
- meetings with the EPA Chair and EPA Services staff throughout the assessment process as required
- site visits and proponent briefings for EPA members in relation to proposals under EIA
- formal presentations to the EPA Board as part of proposal considerations
- escalation of key concerns using DWER's [escalation protocol](#).

# Feedback welcome

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## **How to contact the EPA**

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