

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the
Environment and Water

Our Ref: DWERT4935
Enquiries: Shaun Meredith
Email: shaun.meredith@dwer.wa.gov.au

By email : prf@dcceew.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

POWERING THE REGIONS FUND – CONSULTATION SUBMISSION

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Consultation Update on the Commonwealth's Powering the Regions Fund.

The Western Australian (WA) Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) is an independent statutory body with responsibility to use its best endeavours to protect the environment. One of the EPA's objectives is to minimise the risk of environmental harm associated with climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions as far as possible.

To this end, we support decarbonisation projects as a key objective in protecting WA's environment. The EPA notes that empowering regional Australia to support emissions reduction goals should occur in conjunction with regional environmental protection frameworks, which is of key strategic interest to the EPA. The EPA also notes that other potentially significant environmental impacts of decarbonisation projects (e.g., biodiversity and/or water quality impacts resulting from land clearing) will need to be assessed and mitigated appropriately, as they are for other major projects in WA.

In WA, any project can be referred by the proponent or a member of the public to the EPA for assessment. We therefore encourage all proponents to ensure that projects fully consider and are aligned with the EPA's environmental factor objectives to facilitate a smooth and efficient assessment process. This ensures that decarbonisation projects will have fewer technical environmental assessment and management challenges, will have more public acceptance and trust, and can demonstrate key legislation and policy objectives are met.

Beyond the WA context, the EPA notes that the need to minimise environmental impacts of decarbonisation projects is not articulated clearly in the consultation documentation. Instead, we consider that it may be appropriate that the design principles describe the need to minimise broader environmental impacts of decarbonisation projects, including impacts on biodiversity, in accordance with the requirements of the relevant jurisdiction.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Tonts', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Matthew Tonts

Chair – Environmental Protection Authority

3 February 2023