

EPA delivers report on remote salt lake fertiliser proposal

The independent Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) has finalised its assessment of a sulphate of potash proposal, recommending the project be implemented subject to strict conditions.

Agrimin Limited's [Mackay Sulphate of Potash Project](#), located on the Northern Territory border about 490km south of Halls Creek, proposes trenches and solar evaporation ponds, renewable energy and processing infrastructure, and a 350km sealed haul road to connect the site with the public Tanami Highway road network.

At 100km wide and covering 4737km², Lake Mackay is the largest inland salt lake in Western Australia and sits nearly 1000km by road from its port facility at Wyndham.

EPA Chair Darren Walsh said the complex proposal had the potential to result in significant impacts to the night parrot, greater bilby and great desert skink so the assessment had focussed on the potential loss and fragmentation of significant habitat.

During an environmental impact assessment over more than five years the EPA encouraged the proponent to identify additional avoidance and mitigation measures. This public environmental review included a four-week public consultation period, responses to public submissions by Agrimin Ltd, and two amendments to development envelopes by the proponent. As well as the on-lake and off-lake operations and a borefield water pipeline, one of the key areas of assessment was the haul road for trucking the fertiliser product to Wyndham.

Mr Walsh said that following consultation with Traditional Owner groups, the proponent had realigned the proposed haul road to reduce the clearing of native vegetation and consequent potential impact on the night parrot.

"Now about 30 per cent of the road would be on an existing track that connects the Kiwirrkurra community to the Balgo community," he said.

Mr Walsh added that while minimum buffer distances of 100 metres were generally accepted to avoid disturbance around bird roosts, the EPA had decided to recommend a 300-metre buffer.

“Given the conservation importance of this site to the night parrot, and the uncertainty regarding disturbance ranges for roosting night parrots, the EPA considers that increasing the buffer to 300 metres is appropriate,” he said.

“Other recommendations by the EPA include clearing only undertaken during daylight hours, speed limits on the haul road to reduce fauna strike, and no operational use of the haul road at night.”

The night parrot is listed as critically endangered under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*, endangered under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, and is listed on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature list as critically endangered.

Other conditions to avoid direct impacts to the lake’s island habitat where migratory shorebirds and waterbirds breed and stygofauna have been recorded, were recommended by the EPA.

[EPA Report 1777](#) also commended the proponent on the extent of its consultation with the Parna Ngururpa, Tjamu Tjamu and Tjurabalan Peoples during the assessment process.

The EPA’s report to the Minister for Environment is now open for a three-week public appeal period, closing 31 December 2024. Appeals should be directed to the [Office of the Appeals Convenor](#). The Minister for Environment will make the final decision on the proposal.

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