

EPA's revised GHG guidance flags deep and substantial cuts

The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) has updated its greenhouse gas guidance to minimise the risk of environmental harm to Western Australia's environment associated with climate change.

The guidance, first published in April 2020 has been updated to take into account up to date climate science, law and policy, and to reflect the EPA's view that deep and substantial emission reductions are needed this decade, as well as achievement of net zero by 2050.

The EPA uses the Environmental Factor Guideline – Greenhouse Gas Emissions (EFG – GHG) in its environmental impact assessment process to outline how it will consider emissions from proposals and whether proponents have reduced GHG emissions as far as practicable.

EPA Chair Professor Matthew Tonts said the revised guideline reflected the independent Authority's view that if deep and substantial cuts by 2030 and a straight line after that could not be demonstrated, then proponents would need to demonstrate why this wasn't practicable.

The EPA also welcomed the passing of the legislation enabling the reform of the Commonwealth government's safeguard mechanism. The EPA has developed its guidance to ensure that the safeguard mechanism can be taken into account, thereby reducing the potential for regulatory duplication and reporting requirements.

Professor Tonts said there had been significant consultation with stakeholders, government, community groups and members of the public on the revised guidance, with over 1000 submissions received and much of the feedback incorporated.

"In many ways this update normalises what many proponents are already doing and our existing assessment practices," he said. "But in line with current science, we as a State know where we need to be in the future and the EPA will require all proponents consider best practice to get there."

Key changes to the guideline, published today on the [EPA website](#), include:

- Increased clarity on the information the EPA needs to assess GHG emissions and their effects on the Western Australian environment;

- The EPA making explicit that it will be able to consider whether other laws, such as the safeguard mechanism, can meet the EPA's objectives, and so allow proponents to avoid the potential for duplicated regulation;
- Proponents undertaking independent best practice review of measures that can be adopted to avoid or reduce scope 1 emissions at commencement, and throughout the life of the proposal;
- The EPA will require review of whether any offsets meet integrity standards and expects that these should only be used as a last resort;
- Mechanisms to enhance the transparency and clarity of a proposal's emissions estimates and greenhouse gas management.

“This guidance shows that the EPA expects that proponents demonstrate best practice that helps send Western Australia into a net zero future,” Professor Tonts said.

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