

Media Statement

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EPA recommends approval for Pilbara renewables project

The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) has completed its first assessment in the Pilbara's Maitland Strategic Industrial Area (MSIA), recommending approval for the Woodside Solar Facility subject to strict conditions.

The proposed solar photovoltaic farm will generate electricity for industrial customers via the North-West Interconnected System and includes up to one million solar panels and a battery energy storage system.

EPA Chair Professor Matthew Tonts said recommended conditions for the proposal, located 15km south-west of Karratha, included measures to mitigate impacts to flora, fauna, foraging vegetation and Aboriginal cultural heritage.

Professor Tonts said the geographical location meant the MSIA was so far relatively undisturbed.

"This means future proposals within the Maitland estate will need to consider how to address cumulative impacts to flora and vegetation, terrestrial fauna and other environmental factors and how these impacts will intersect with impacts to social surroundings, especially Aboriginal cultural heritage," he said. "The EPA proposes that a cumulative assessment is required to establish expectations for proponents planning projects in the MSIA.

"In addition, this EPA report recommends that land should be set aside within the MSIA specifically for the use and benefit of the Ngarluma People."

The EPA also used the Woodside Solar Facility report to detail advice for future proponents of renewable energy projects.

Professor Tonts said the EPA expected proponents to consider the level and amount of disturbance required to implement each renewable proposal, comparative to the savings of greenhouse gas.

"The management of waste produced by future renewable energy projects will also be a key consideration in our assessment of these types of proposals," he said. "Proponents will need to consider waste management and recycling of solar panels and other associated renewable energy infrastructure as part of a circular waste economy."

The EPA's report to the Minister for Environment is now open for a three-week public appeal period, closing 4 October 2023. Appeals should be directed to the [Office of the Appeals Convenor](#). The Minister for Environment will make the final decision on the proposal. EPA Report 1746 can be found on the [EPA website](#).

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