



## **Ministerial Statement of Expectation to the Environmental Protection Authority**

### **Overview**

This Expectation Statement (the Statement) from the Minister for Environment is made under section 21B of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* (the Act) and sets out the Minister's priorities and objectives as they relate to the operation of the functions of the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) under the Act.

The Statement outlines expectations aimed at improving the efficiency of environmental assessments, engagement with proponents, and its interactions with government agencies.

The Statement also sets out the WA Government's key priorities in terms of economic development and diversification, the renewable energy transition and major public infrastructure projects and initiatives.

It is the WA Government's expectation that the EPA acknowledges the strategic importance and gives commensurate regard to these key initiatives when performing its functions in an effective and timely manner, which engages and assists relevant parties in their interactions with the EPA, while maintaining the highest environmental standards.

The Statement acknowledges the EPA's statutory independence and role in protecting the environment and preventing, controlling and abating pollution.

### **Introduction**

The EPA is an independent statutory authority.

The functions of the EPA include:

- conducting environmental impact assessments
- preparing statutory policies for environmental protection
- preparing and publishing guidelines for managing environmental impacts, and
- providing strategic advice to the Minister for Environment.

The Act requires that the Minister for Environment provide the EPA with a Statement of Expectation specifying the Minister's objectives on matters relating to its functions. The Act requires that the EPA have regard to the Statement in the performance of its functions and to report on consideration of the Statement in its annual report.

The Act also requires the EPA to publish the Statement.

### **WA Government's strategic priorities**

The WA Government has a number of key strategic priorities which will require significant, ongoing interaction with the EPA, including:

- Delivering continued economic development through the facilitation of job-creating projects, while maintaining the highest environmental standards.

- Economic diversification, including supporting hydrogen and critical minerals projects, and facilitating additional downstream processing.
- Facilitating construction of residential housing to boost housing supply and housing choice.
- Driving Western Australia's renewable energy transition, including the development of renewable energy projects, delivering new transmission infrastructure, and supporting the Collie region to attract new industrial projects.
- Delivery of Westport, which will see container trade move from Fremantle to Kwinana-including a new port, and associated freight, road, rail and logistics infrastructure.
- Facilitating investment in new tourism initiatives by reducing regulatory barriers, streamlining processes and better supporting proponents to deliver experiences, attractions and accommodation options.
- Delivery of Western Australia's next seawater desalination plant in Alkimos.
- Expansion of Western Australia's softwood plantation estate to secure sufficient and reliable supply for the housing and construction industries.
- Construction of Western Australia's new public Women's and Babies Hospital.

These strategic priorities frame and provide context for the Minister's expectations regarding how the EPA manages its assessment priorities and processes.

### **Expectations**

The Minister for Environment expects that the EPA will implement necessary policies, processes and practices to support the following expectations to the extent consistent with the Act:

#### Alignment with policies and priorities

- When determining assessment priorities and escalation, consider key government priorities and policies.
- Where consistent with the Act adopt processes and initiatives to ensure a streamlined approach to regulatory assessment that reduces unnecessary duplication.

#### Efficiency and timeliness of environmental assessments

- Ensure environmental assessments are completed in a timely and efficient manner.
- Develop and report on performance metrics for environmental impact assessment processes.
- Ensure risk-based assessment principles and streamlined processes are ingrained into the operation of the EPA where the Act permits.
- Review EPA's technical guidance suite to ensure it reflects contemporary scientific understanding and consideration of risk-based approaches to biodiversity protection.
- Support the establishment of subject matter expert advisory committees to provide advice on draft guidance.

#### Reducing duplication

- Reduce duplication of environmental assessments of projects and proposals where the Act permits.
- Support reporting to Council of Regulators on the extent to which the EPA is using relevant sections in the Act to enable other regulators/decision making authorities to regulate cultural aspects of 'social surroundings' and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Review EPA policies in response to the State Government's revised *Greenhouse Gas Emissions Policy for Major Projects 2024*.

#### Engagement with proponents

- Establish a Stakeholder Management Plan that outlines proponent roles and responsibilities.
- Adopt procedures and processes which provide a framework for collaborative and transparent communication with proponents.
- Support implementation of an escalation protocol which proponents can access when delays or requests for information in relation to the EPA's functions are considered unreasonable.

#### **Delivery against the Statement and reporting requirements**

Under the Act, the EPA is required to have regard to the Statement in the performance of its functions.

The EPA must report on how it has had regard to the Statement as part of its annual report process.