



Northern Territory Government

**Western Australian Environmental Protection Authority/  
Northern Territory Department of Lands, Planning & Environment**

**Joint Environmental Assessment**

**ORD RIVER IRRIGATION AREA STAGE 2  
(M2 CHANNEL SUPPLY AREA), KUNUNURRA**

**GUIDELINES FOR AN  
ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME  
(ERMP)/ ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (EIS)**

(WA EPA Assessment Number 1240)

July 1999

## **Foreword**

The Western Australian (WA) and Northern Territory (NT) Governments have agreed that the proposal to expand the Ord River Irrigation Scheme and develop the M2 Channel Supply Area should be jointly assessed using the WA environmental impact assessment process. It has also been agreed that the assessment should be as an Environmental Review and Management Programme (ERMP) (WA) and Environment Impact Statement (EIS) (NT).

Environment impact assessment is aimed at protecting the environmental by ensuring that development is environmentally sound and well managed. It also recognises that people want to have a say before the Governments make a decision.

Wesfarmers/ Marubeni and the Water Corporation of Western Australia, as co-proponents, have been required to prepare a joint ERMP and EIS to assist the WA Environmental Protection Authority (WA EPA) and NT Government in assessing the environmental impacts of the project. An environmental impact assessment is a document which describes to the WA and NT Governments, and the community what the proponents wants to do, what the environmental impacts will be and how the proponents intend to manage the project.

The WA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), on behalf of the WA EPA, and the NT Department of Lands, Planning and Environment (DLPE), have jointly prepared guidelines for the ERMP/EIA. These guidelines identify environmental factors they expect the proponent to address in the ERMP/EIA.

Public comment was invited on the guidelines from 20 April 1999 to 14 May 1999. Comments received were taken into account in the final preparation of these guidelines.

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These guidelines are provided for the preparation of the proponent's environmental review document. The specific environmental factors to be addressed are identified in Part A. The generic guidelines for the format of an environmental review document are provided in Part B.

**The environmental review document must address all elements of Part 'A' and Part 'B' of these guidelines prior to approval being given to commence the public review.**

## **Part A: Specific Guidelines for the preparation of the Environmental Review and Management Programme (ERMP)/ Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)**

### **1. Introduction**

#### **Background**

On 19 April 1995, the Premier of WA and the Chief Minister of the NT signed a Memorandum of Understanding regarding the expansion of the Ord River Irrigation Scheme.

The first part of the expansion of the scheme is the development of the M2 Channel Supply Area, which is located on the Weaber, Keep and Knox Creek Plains that straddle the WA/ NT border north of Kununurra (Attachment 3).

The proponents for the development of the M2 Channel Supply Area are Wesfarmers/ Marubeni and the Water Corporation of Western Australia as co-proponents, with the Wesfarmers/Marubeni joint venture responsible for development associated with the agricultural land and the Water Corporation responsible for water-related infrastructure.

#### **The proposal**

The proposal to develop the M2 Channel Supply Area involves the following major elements:

- development of approximately 36,000ha for farms and infrastructure, including ownership and operation by Wesfarmers/ Marubeni of approximately 27,000 ha of this land for sugarcane farms;
- development of a sugar mill by Wesfarmers/ Marubeni with a capacity of approximately 400,000 tpa of raw sugar and 160,000 tpa of molasses;
- development of raw sugar and molasses storage and handling facilities at Wyndham Port by Wesfarmers/ Marubeni;
- allocation of up to 15% of the net irrigable area for sale to independent farmers on an unconditional basis with respect to the types of crops that may be grown; and
- construction of approximately 400 km of water supply channels and drains, as well as almost 150 km of flood protection levees.

### **2. Assessment Context**

The Ord Irrigation Area commenced agricultural land development in the 1960's. This proposal represents a second stage of irrigated land development, with water supplied from the existing Ord River Dam.

There has been substantial change in the context within which Stage 1 and Stage 2 need to be considered. For instance, the Stage 1 development preceded the *WA Environmental Protection Act 1986* and the related growth in community environmental awareness and statutory assessment. In addition, heritage legislation, water legislation reform, national and international biological diversity agreements and greenhouse gas protocols, and the national agreement on ecologically sustainable development have all been major additions to the broad context within which this Stage 2 proposal must be examined. This context is not only important for proponents and

relevant environmental agencies, but also for the community and the WA, NT and Commonwealth Governments.

A proposal of this scale also needs to be placed within a local and regional context, particularly for such factors as vegetation systems, land systems, water regimes, climate, and fauna. Consideration needs to be given to the adequacy of protection of environmental values within and adjoining the project area from the consequences of development.

The environmental impact assessment process requires the proponent of a proposed development to identify the environmental issues, to describe the environmental aspects of the development area and to outline how they intend to address environmental issues. Consideration also needs to be given to the proposed development area in a regional context. The determination of whether a particular proposed response is adequate is the role of the environmental assessor, through the assessment process, and the role of the associated Government in its decision-making. In order for those responses or solutions to be considered, there must be transparency by the proponent to show how those actions were chosen and the likely success of the selected response. The criteria used to define and select a particular response to an identified issue needs to be specified in the environmental documentation.

The WA EPA has decided that the assessment of this proposal will be undertaken in two stages. The first will look at the key environmental issues, of which the magnitude of the proposed clearing and its effect on biological diversity and significant social values are the major issues. The manner by which these and the other factors listed in these guidelines will be managed will form the second stage of the assessment. This approach means that there will be two assessment reports produced by the WA EPA.

To assist the proponent, community, the WA, NT and Commonwealth Governments, the WA EPA has outlined in these guidelines how it intends to approach the assessment of the implications for biological diversity.

The term 'environment' under the Northern Territory *Environmental Assessment Act 1982* means all aspects of the surroundings of man including the physical, biological, economic, cultural and social aspects. The term is more narrowly defined under the WA *Environmental Protection Act 1986*. In view of this difference, some issues identified within these guidelines are beyond the scope of the WA EPA to consider in its assessment of the proposal and advice to the WA Minister for the Environment.

In preparing an ERMP/EIS, the proponent should bear in mind the following aims of the ERMP/EIS and public review process:

- to provide a source of information from which interested individuals and groups may gain an understanding of the proposal, the need for the proposal, the alternatives, the environment which it would affect, the impacts that may occur and the measures to be taken to minimise these impacts;
- to provide a forum for public consultation and informed comment on the proposal; and
- to provide a framework in which decision-makers may consider the environmental aspects of the proposal in parallel with economic, technical and other factors.

The proponent should ensure that the ERMP/EIS demonstrates compliance with the goals, objectives and guiding principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development as set out in the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development and the principles set out in the National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia's Biological Diversity. The ERMP/EIS should describe the land in terms of its cultural, ecological, economic and social values.

As set out in the following guidelines, the scope of this assessment shall encompass those issues and alternatives directly related to the development of the Ord River Irrigation Area Stage 2 (M2 Channel Supply Area) project.

### **Social Impacts**

A separate study of the social, cultural and economic impact of developments related to this project on Miriuwung and Gajerrong people is being conducted by the Aboriginal Representative Bodies with the support of Wesfarmers/ Water Corporation in parallel to the ERMP/EIS.

To ensure that there is the opportunity for consideration by the public and assessors (WA EPA and NT DLPE) in a timely manner, information from this study and other reports should be referred to in the ERMP/EIS. Additional relevant information should be published prior to the assessors reporting to their respective Ministers.

A number of studies were commissioned by the Department of Resources Development (DRD) to consider social implications of a number of development scenarios for Ord Stage 2. These studies were carried out prior to the selection of Wesfarmers/ Marubeni and Water Corporation as the preferred developer for the M2 project area.

The ERMP/EIS is expected to update and revise information consistent with the specific development proposal.

Studies that contain social information that may be relevant to this assessment, include the:

- Kununurra-Wyndham Area Development Strategy (KWADS),
- Naralup Population Study;
- Beckwith Social Impact Assessments; and
- study by AACM International Pty Ltd titled 'Aboriginal Consultations - Ord River Irrigation Scheme Stage 2 (September 1997)'

(i) Kununurra-Wyndham Area Development Strategy (KWADS),

The KWADS study is being undertaken by the WA Ministry for Planning (MfP) in association with the Shire of Wyndham-East Kimberley and NT DLPE. The purpose of this study is to provide assistance to community, private enterprise and Government agencies to guide and control land use, protect and manage environmental and heritage values, recommend on settlement expansion, promote tourism/ development nodes, assess the need for further industrial land and coordinate transport and infrastructure provision.

This draft plan is expected to be released by the MfP for public review in the third quarter of 1999.

(ii) Naralup Populations Study

DRD commissioned this study in 1996 to examine the population impacts of developing Stage 2 of the irrigation project and identifies population categories generated by the development, tourism and other industry.

(iii) Beckwith Social Impact Assessments

Potential social impacts were examined by Dr Beckwith in 1997 as part of studies by Sinclair Knight Merz related to the Ord Stage 2 development. This study identified current community circumstances and the needs of the existing resident population and establishes what benefits and increased demands on social infrastructure may occur if the population were to substantially increase as a result of Stage 2.

(iv) Aboriginal Consultations - Ord River Irrigation Scheme Stage 2 (AACM)

DRD commissioned this study in 1997 to address Aboriginal aspects of social issues relating to the proposed development of the second phase of the Ord River Irrigation Area. The report complements the earlier social impact assessment conducted by Dr Beckwith.

The Naralup, Beckwith and AACM studies are available from DRD.

### **Water Allocation Plan**

It is also important to note that the WA EPA will be providing advice to the WA Government on the Water and Rivers Commission Draft Interim Water Allocation Plan for the Ord River. This draft interim plan cannot be assessed by the WA EPA as it does not represent a proposal under the WA *Environmental Protection Act*. However, the WA EPA will provide advice in a report pursuant to S16(e) of the WA *Environmental Protection Act*.

The purpose of the interim plan is to:

- define bulk water allocations based on the available hydrological data and the estimates of demand for current and potential water uses;
- describe the system by which licences will be issued under current legislative arrangements; and
- describe the investigations required to allow allocations to be refined, and the process by which any review of allocations will be undertaken; and

The objectives of the interim plan are to:

- make an interim provision of water to the Lower Ord River system and its associated environment;
- determine the remaining water that may be available for diversion for consumptive uses;
- document interim allocation decisions as to how much water should be assigned to the Stage 1 and Stage 2 developments; and
- ensure those existing commitment and longer term demands for hydro-power generation can be accommodated within the interim allocations and that a feasible reservoir operating strategy can be developed that meets all commitments.

This draft interim plan has been released for public comment for a period of eight weeks, closing 20 August 1999.

### 3. Environmental factors relevant to this proposal

At this stage, the WA EPA believes the relevant environmental factors, objectives and work required is as detailed in the table below:

CONTENT		SCOPE OF WORK	
Factor	Site specific factor	WA EPA objective	Work required for the environmental review
<b>BIOPHYSICAL</b>			
Biodiversity	Ecosystems	To maintain biological diversity meaning the different plants and animals and the ecosystems they form, at the levels of genetic diversity, species diversity and ecosystem diversity.	<p>Baseline studies to identify existing genetic diversity, species diversity and ecosystem diversity of the development area and in a relevant regional context to ensure that the project will not affect the diversity of and representativeness of biodiversity in the East Kimberley/ Western Northern Territory.</p> <p>Detail measures proposed to ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• avoidance of loss of biological diversity;</li> <li>• maintenance of ecological linkages between different ecosystems and habitat types; and.</li> <li>• protection or rehabilitation of representative ecosystems within and adjacent to the proposed irrigation scheme which have been identified as being of significant local and regional conservation value.</li> </ul> <p>Identify and define areas which are “comparable” to the project (including buffer areas) in terms of biodiversity and ecological function at the ecosystem, species and genetic levels.</p> <p>Assess the environmental significance of alterations to the species assemblages in terms of changes to ecosystem/ ecological function pre and post disturbance.</p>



CONTENT		SCOPE OF WORK	
Factor	Site specific factor	WA EPA objective	Work required for the environmental review
Terrestrial flora	Vegetation communities	Maintain the species diversity, geographic distribution and productivity of vegetation communities.	<p>Baseline studies to identify existing flora species and vegetation communities (including riparian) present in the proposal area and representation outside project area.</p> <p>Detail measures proposed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to ensure protection or rehabilitation of representative vegetation communities within the local and regional context which have been identified as being of significant local and regional conservation value;</li> <li>• to ensure introduced crops and weeds are managed so that there are no adverse impacts on the adjacent terrestrial environment;</li> <li>• to address quarantine for disease;</li> <li>• for coordination of long term management of the proposed irrigation scheme to ensure no long term adverse impact on the conservation values of the adjacent terrestrial environment arise from the development; and</li> <li>• to establish buffer zones, protected areas and conservation zones to ensure the maintenance of dependant species.</li> </ul>
	Declared Rare and Priority Flora	Protect Declared Rare and Priority Flora, consistent with the provisions of the WA Wildlife Conservation Act 1950 and other relevant State, Northern Territory and Commonwealth legislation.	<p>Baseline studies to identify existing Declared Rare or Priority Flora (or equivalent under NT or Commonwealth legislation (including species listed on the schedules of the Commonwealth's <i>Endangered Species Protection Act 1992</i>) present in area of proposed development.</p> <p>Identify threats and potential threats to Declared Rare and Priority Flora (or equivalent under NT or Commonwealth legislation).</p> <p>Detail measures proposed to ensure protection or rehabilitation of any Declared Rare or Priority Flora (or equivalent under NT or Commonwealth legislation).</p>

CONTENT		SCOPE OF WORK	
Factor	Site specific factor	WA EPA objective	Work required for the environmental review
Estuarine flora	Estuarine flora	Maintain the ecological function, abundance, species diversity and geographic distribution of estuarine and marine flora	<p>Baseline studies to identify existing estuarine or marine vegetation assemblages of the Keep River and Sandy Creek.</p> <p>Detail measures proposed to ensure protection of marine flora downstream and in tidal reaches of Keep River and Sandy Creek from increased water flow, sediment load, pesticides and other chemical runoff.</p>
Terrestrial fauna	Terrestrial fauna	Maintain the abundance, species diversity and geographical distribution of terrestrial fauna.	<p>Baseline studies to identify existing occurrence of fauna and usage of the proposed development area by terrestrial fauna.</p> <p>Detail measures proposed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure protection or rehabilitation of fauna habitat, including that downstream of the proposed development; and</li> <li>• establish buffer zones, protected areas and conservation zones to ensure the existence of dependant species.</li> </ul>
	Specially protected (threatened) fauna	<p>Protect Specially Protected (Threatened) Fauna, consistent with the provisions of the WA Wildlife Conservation Act 1950 and other relevant State, Northern Territory and Commonwealth legislation.</p> <p>Protect Threatened Fauna and Priority Fauna species and their habitats, consistent with the provisions of the WA Wildlife Conservation Act 1950 and other relevant State, Northern Territory and Commonwealth legislation.</p>	<p>Baseline studies to identify existing usage of area of proposed development by Specially Protected (Threatened) or Threatened Fauna and Priority Fauna species (or equivalent under NT or Commonwealth legislation). This should include species protected by international agreements such as CAMBA, JAMBA and Ramsar and species listed on the schedules of the Commonwealth's <i>Endangered Species Protection Act 1992</i>.</p> <p>Detail measures proposed to ensure protection or rehabilitation of any Specially protected (threatened) or priority fauna species or habitat (or equivalent under NT or Commonwealth legislation). This should include species protected by international agreements such as CAMBA, JAMBA and Ramsar.</p>

<b>CONTENT</b>		<b>SCOPE OF WORK</b>	
<b>Factor</b>	<b>Site specific factor</b>	<b>WA EPA objective</b>	<b>Work required for the environmental review</b>
	Subterranean fauna	Maintain the abundance, species diversity and geographical distribution of subterranean fauna	Baseline studies to identify existing usage of area of proposed development by subterranean fauna, including information on habitat use, ecological requirements, occurrence and tolerance of subterranean species to changes in water quality and level.  Detail measures proposed to ensure protection or rehabilitation of any subterranean fauna habitat.
Aquatic fauna	Aquatic fauna	Maintain the ecological function, abundance, species diversity and geographic distribution of aquatic fauna.	Baseline studies to identify existing usage by aquatic fauna of rivers, streams and wetlands, including those downstream of proposed development.  Detail measures to ensure aquatic fauna are not adversely affected by proposed development.
Wetlands	Wetlands	To protect the environmental values and maintain or enhance key ecological functions of the wetlands	Baseline studies to identify existing environmental values of permanent and seasonal wetlands within the project area and a description of their relative environmental and conservation significance.  Identify wetlands within or in the vicinity of the project area that are listed as Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention.  Detail measures proposed to ensure protection, maintenance or enhancement of key environmental values of affected wetlands.
	Watercourses	Maintain the integrity, functions and environmental values of watercourses.	Baseline studies to identify existing environmental values of Keep River, Knox, Sandy and Border Creeks.  Detail measures proposed to ensure protection and enhancement of environmental values of affected watercourses, including changes resulting from modifications to surface runoff and diversion of flows by the proposal.

	Groundwater quantity	Maintain groundwater so that existing and potential uses, including ecosystem maintenance are protected	Baseline studies to identify existing groundwater levels in the project area and existing components of the environment dependant on groundwater.  Detail measures proposed to ensure protection of existing and potential uses, including ecosystem maintenance, from changes in groundwater levels.
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CONTENT		SCOPE OF WORK	
Factor	Site specific factor	WA EPA objective	Work required for the environmental review
	Surface water quantity	Maintain surface water so that existing and potential uses, including ecosystem maintenance are protected	Baseline studies to determine surface water quantity and streamflows.  Detail measures proposed to ensure no adverse downstream impacts arise from development.
	Mosquitoes and disease vectors	Mosquito numbers on-site should not adversely affect the health, welfare and amenity of future residents; and  Ensure the breeding of mosquitoes is controlled to the satisfaction of the relevant public health agencies without adversely affecting other flora and fauna	Baseline studies to identify existing mosquito and other disease vectors present within or in the vicinity of the project area.  Detail measures proposed to ensure disease vectors and pest, such as mosquitoes, are adequately monitored and managed. Where required provide details of drainage systems designed for the prevention of mosquito breeding.  Note: the Kimberley region is within the receptive zone for malaria and Australian encephalitis is endemic.
Land	Hydrology	Establish stable, sustainable landform consistent with surroundings.	Baseline studies to document existing hydrological regimes across the project area, particularly in relation to watercourses, other landscape features and on the Weaber, Keep and Knox Plains.  Detail measures proposed to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• avoid possible impacts from erosion, flooding and other changes resulting from modifications to surface runoff and groundwater behaviour;</li> <li>• ensure adjacent vegetation communities are unaffected by changes in natural sheet water flows or from altered surface water hydrology associated with diversion of water by the proposal; and</li> <li>• assess and respond to long term risks/trends in salinity and groundwater levels.</li> </ul>

CONTENT		SCOPE OF WORK	
Factor	Site specific factor	WA EPA objective	Work required for the environmental review
<b>POLLUTION MANAGEMENT</b>			
Air	Particulates and dust	Ensure that the dust levels generated by the proposal do not adversely impact welfare and amenity of surrounding land users or cause health problems by meeting statutory requirements and acceptable standards.	Detail measures proposed to ensure impact from construction and operational activities comply with particulates and dust statutory requirements and guidelines.
	Chemical spray drift	Ensure that spray drift generated by chemicals used for the proposal does not adversely impact health, welfare and amenity of surrounding land users and the environment by meeting statutory requirements and acceptable standards.	Detail measures proposed to ensure impact from agricultural and other activities comply with statutory requirements and acceptable standards for chemical spray drift.
	Greenhouse gases	<p>To minimise greenhouse gas emissions for the project and reduce emissions per unit product as low as reasonably practicable; and</p> <p>To mitigate greenhouse gases emissions in accordance with the Framework Convention on Climate Change 1992, and in accordance with established Commonwealth and State policies.</p>	<p>Baseline studies to estimate the existing greenhouse benefits related to the existing vegetation and land management practices within the project area.</p> <p>Detail measures proposed to ensure that greenhouse gas emissions meet acceptable standards and relevant State, NT and Commonwealth policy and legislation.</p>

<b>CONTENT</b>		<b>SCOPE OF WORK</b>	
<b>Factor</b>	<b>Site specific factor</b>	<b>WA EPA objective</b>	<b>Work required for the environmental review</b>
Water	Groundwater quality	Maintain or improve the quality of groundwater to ensure that existing and potential uses, including ecosystem maintenance are protected.	<p>Baseline studies to identify existing groundwater quality in the superficial and related deep aquifers within and in the vicinity of the project area.</p> <p>Detail measures proposed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure existing and potential groundwater uses, including ecosystem maintenance are protected; and</li> <li>• ensure that potential for pollution (as a result of the application of herbicides, pesticides and fertilisers) and salinity is managed so that there are no adverse impacts on groundwater quality.</li> </ul>
	Surface water quality	Maintain or improve the quality of surface water to ensure that existing and potential uses, including ecosystem maintenance are protected.	<p>Baseline studies to identify existing surface water quality in watercourses and other surface flows in the project area.</p> <p>Assessment of the potential presence and potential impacts from acid sulphate soils.</p> <p>Detail measures proposed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure the quality of surface water is maintained so that existing and potential uses, including ecosystem maintenance are protected; and</li> <li>• ensure that potential for pollution (as a result of increased sediment loads, herbicides, pesticides and fertilisers) and salinity is managed so that there are no adverse impacts on surface water quality.</li> </ul>
<b>SOCIAL SURROUNDINGS</b>			
Recreation	Recreation	Maintain or enhance recreational usage of the project area, consistent with plans developed by planning agencies.	<p>Baseline studies to identify existing recreational uses within and in the vicinity of the project area.</p> <p>Detail measures to maintain recreational values within the project area, especially the Keep River.</p>

CONTENT		SCOPE OF WORK	
Factor	Site specific factor	WA EPA objective	Work required for the environmental review
Culture and heritage	Aboriginal heritage and culture	<p>Ensure the proposal complies with the requirements of relevant State, Northern Territory and Commonwealth legislation; and</p> <p>Ensure that changes to the biological and physical environment resulting from the project do not adversely affect cultural associations with the area.</p>	<p>Describe the archaeological and heritage values of the project area and their relationship to other relevant areas.</p> <p>Describe the cultural and traditional relationship of Miriuwung and Gajerrong people with the environment of the project area.</p> <p>Describe the Native Title rights and interests of Aboriginal people in relation to the project area as they are affected by the proposal.</p> <p>Detail measures proposed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure the proposal complies with the <i>Aboriginal Heritage Act</i> and other relevant State, NT and Commonwealth legislation including the <i>Australian Heritage Commission Act 1975</i>;</li> <li>• ensure that changes to the biological and physical environment do not adversely affect cultural and traditional associations and the use of the area;</li> <li>• address rights and interests of Aboriginal people that may be affected by changes to the biological and physical environment; and</li> <li>• ensure appropriate consultation with traditional owners and the community.</li> </ul>
Social	Social surrounds	<p>To maintain and protect the aesthetic, cultural, economic and social surroundings, where those surroundings affect or are affected by physical or biological change.</p>	<p>Describe the existing and anticipated demographics in the project area and in other areas affected by the proposal (eg Kununurra and Wyndham).</p> <p>Describe community infrastructure requirements resulting from the proposal, including in Kununurra and Wyndham.</p> <p>Describe the existing wilderness and aesthetic values of the project area.</p> <p>Detail measures to maintain and protect wilderness and aesthetic values.</p>



<b>OTHER</b>			
Cumulative impact			<p>Describe relationships between this proposal and other land uses (eg Ord Stage 1).</p> <p>Detail measures proposed to ensure that cumulative environmental impacts are avoided and/or managed.</p>

These factors should be addressed within the environmental review document for the public to consider and make comment to the WA EPA. The WA EPA expects to address these factors in its report to the Minister for the Environment. The factor of biological diversity is discussed in more detail in Section 4 of these guidelines.

The WA EPA expects the proponent to take due care in ensuring any other relevant environmental factors which may be of interest to the public are addressed.

#### **4. The environmental factor of biological diversity**

The Ord River Stage 2 M2 proposal involves substantial development of up to 50,000 ha of land on the Weaber Plain, Knox River Plain and Keep River Plain, located within the Kimberley region of WA and the adjoining portion of the NT. There will be large-scale clearing of land within pastoral lease, for irrigated agriculture and related infrastructure, new water-related management requirements, as well as issues associated with the introduction of agricultural crops and chemicals. These developments will require a significant change in the environment in both the short-term and longer-term.

Environmental impact assessment of the proposal will require the consideration of these short and long-term issues and their individual and cumulative consequences. For instance, the loss of up to 50,000 ha of vegetation through clearing is one of the fundamental environmental issues, both from the point of view of the extent of clearing as well as the threats to biological diversity in doing so. This consideration relates to the environmental factor of biological diversity, which must be addressed through the proposal approval process. In WA this will require approvals in at least three areas: environmental approval under the WA *Environmental Protection Act* 1986, water provision under the WA *Rights in Water and Irrigation Act* 1911, and government approval through a new State Agreement Act. The latter two cannot proceed until environmental approval has been obtained.

The WA EPA has given consideration to how it will assess this key environmental factor of biological diversity.

In 1996 the Commonwealth Government, with all State and Territory Governments, signed the National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia's Biological Diversity. Conservation of biological diversity is a foundation of ecologically sustainable development. In this regard, one of the objectives of the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development is to protect biological diversity at the ecosystem, species and genetic levels and to maintain essential ecological processes and life-support systems.

The National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia's Biological Diversity adopted the following principles as a basis for the Strategy's objectives and actions. These should be used as a guide for implementation:

1. Biological diversity is best conserved in-situ.
2. Although all levels of government have clear responsibility, the cooperation of conservation groups, resource users, indigenous peoples, and the community in general is critical to the conservation of biological diversity.
3. It is vital to anticipate, prevent and attack at source the causes of significant reduction or loss of biological diversity.
4. Processes for and decisions about the allocation and use of Australia's resources should be efficient, equitable and transparent.
5. Lack of full knowledge should not be an excuse for postponing action to conserve biological diversity.
6. The conservation of Australia's biological diversity is affected by international activities and requires actions extending beyond Australia's national jurisdiction.
7. Australians operating beyond our national jurisdiction should respect the principles of conservation and ecologically sustainable use of biological diversity and act in accordance with any relevant national or international laws.
8. Central to the conservation of Australia's biological diversity is the establishment of a comprehensive, representative and adequate system of ecologically viable protected areas integrated with the sympathetic management of all other areas, including agricultural and other resource production systems.
9. The close, traditional association of Australia's indigenous peoples with components of biological diversity should be recognised, as should the desirability of sharing equitably benefits arising from the innovative use of traditional knowledge of biological diversity.

In its consideration of the consequences of the proposal on biological diversity, the WA EPA will focus on these principles and the related objectives and actions in the National Strategy. The WA EPA would expect that the WA, NT and Commonwealth Governments will take account of these principles prior to making any decisions in relation to the proposal, and the WA EPA will ensure that the proponent has addressed these principles in the ERMP. In addition, it is clear to the WA EPA that, in view of the scale of the proposal, the proponent alone may not be able to protect biological diversity and that it will require the participation of the WA and NT Governments as well. The WA EPA's consideration of biological diversity will include the following basic elements:

- a comparison of a number of development scenarios to evaluate protection of biodiversity at the species and ecosystem levels;
- no known species of plant or animal is caused to become extinct as a consequence of the development and the risks to threatened species are considered to be acceptable;
- no association or community of indigenous plants ceases to exist as a result of the project;
- there is comprehensive, adequate and secure representation of scarce or endangered habitats within the project area and/or in areas which are biologically comparable to the project area within WA and the NT, protected in secure reserves;
- the project area itself includes a comprehensive and adequate network of conservation areas and linking corridors whose integrity and biodiversity is secure and protected; and
- the on-site and off-site impacts of the project are identified and the proponent demonstrates that these impacts can be managed.

In relation to land clearing, the WA EPA notes that Objective 7.1 of the National Strategy commits State, Territory and Commonwealth Governments by the year 2000 to, among other things:

- “ (1) *arresting and reversing the decline of remnant native vegetation; and*

- (m) *avoiding or limiting any further broad-scale clearance of native vegetation, consistent with ecologically sustainable management and bioregional planning, to those instances in which regional biological diversity objectives are not compromised.*" (Commonwealth of Australia 1996, p.42)

## 5. Availability of the environmental review

### 5.1 Copies for distribution free of charge

Supplied to DEP:

- Library/Information Centre ..... 9
- WA EPA members ..... 6
- Officers of the DEP (Perth) ..... 8

Distributed by the proponent to:

Government Departments:

- Aboriginal Affairs Department ..... 1
- Agriculture Western Australia ..... 2
- Department of Conservation and Land Management ..... 2
- Department of Land Administration ..... 1
- Department of Minerals and Energy ..... 1
- Department of Resources Development ..... 2
- Environment Australia ..... 10
- Fisheries Western Australia ..... 2
- Kimberley Development Commission ..... 2
- Main Roads Western Australia ..... 1
- Northern Territory Department of Lands Planning and Environment ..... 10  
[and 2 copies on CD rom in ADOBE format (\*.pdf)]
- Water and Rivers Commission ..... 2
- Western Australian Museum ..... 2

Local government authorities:

- Shire of Wyndham/ East Kimberley ..... 2

Libraries:

- J S Battye Library ..... 3
- The Environment Centre (WA) ..... 2
- The Environment Centre (NT) ..... 3
- Shire of Wyndham/ East Kimberley Library ..... 2 (each at least)

Other:

- Aboriginal Legal Service ..... 2

- Conservation Council of WA ..... 1
- Kimberley Land Council ..... 2
- Northern Land Council ..... 2
- Waringarri Aboriginal Corporation ..... 1

## **5.2 Available for public viewing**

- J S Battye Library (WA)
- Shire of Wyndham/ East Kimberley Libraries
- Department of Environmental Protection Library
- NT Department of Lands Planning and Environment
- Department Lands Planning and Environment in Katherine
- NT State Library
- NT Parks and Wildlife Commission at Timber Creek
- Waringarri (Kununurra)
- Joorook Ngari (Wyndham)

## **Part B: Generic Guidelines for the preparation of an environmental review document**

### **1. Overview**

All environmental reviews have the objective of protecting the environment. Environmental impact assessment is deliberately a public process in order to obtain broad ranging advice. The review requires the proponent to describe:

- the proposal;
- receiving environment;
- potential impacts of the proposal on factors of the environment; and
- proposed management strategies to ensure those environmental factors are appropriately protected.

Throughout the assessment process it is the objective of the WA EPA to help the proponent to improve the proposal so the environment is protected. The DEP will co-ordinate, on behalf of the WA EPA, relevant government agencies and the public in providing advice about environmental matters during the assessment of the environmental review for this proposal.

The primary purpose of the environmental review is to provide information on the proposal within the local and regional framework to the WA EPA, with the aim of emphasising how the proposal may impact the relevant environmental factors and how those impacts may be mitigated and managed.

The language used in the body of the environmental review should be kept simple and concise, considering the audience includes non-technical people, and any extensive, technical detail should either be referenced or appended to the environmental review. It should be noted that the environmental review will form the legal basis of the Minister for the Environment's approval of the proposal and therefore the environmental review should include a description of all the main and ancillary components of the proposal, including options where relevant.

Information used to reach conclusions should be properly referenced, including personal communications. Such information should not be misleading or presented in a way that could be construed to mislead readers. Assessments of the significance of an impact should be soundly based rather than unsubstantiated opinion, and each assessment should lead to a discussion of the management of the environmental factor.

For the purposes of assessment, the project officer should be supplied with an electronic copy of the document for use on Macintosh, Microsoft Word Version 6, and any scanned figures. Where possible, figures should be reproducible in a black and white format.

### **2. Objectives of the environmental review**

The objectives of the environmental review are to:

- place this proposal in the context of the local and regional environment;
- adequately describe all components of the proposal, so that the Minister for the Environment can consider approval of a well-defined project;
- provide the basis of the proponent's environmental management program, which shows that the environmental impacts resulting from the proposal, including cumulative impact, can be acceptably managed; and

- communicate clearly with the public (including government agencies), using written material, video or other means, so that the WA EPA can obtain informed public comment to assist in providing advice to government.

### **3. Environmental management**

The WA EPA expects the proponent to have in place an environmental management system appropriate to the scale and impacts of the proposal including provisions for performance review and a commitment to continuous improvement. The system may be integrated with quality and health and safety systems and should include the following elements:

- environmental policy and commitment;
- planning of environmental requirements;
- implementation and operation of environmental requirements;
- measurement and evaluation of environmental performance; and
- review and improvement of environmental outcomes.

A description of the proposed environmental management system should be included in the environmental review documentation. If appropriate, the documentation can be incorporated into a formal environmental management system (such as AS/NZS ISO 14001). Public accountability should be incorporated into the approach on environmental management.

The environmental management program (EMP) is the key document of an environmental management system that should be adequately defined in an environmental review document. The EMP should provide plans to manage the relevant environmental factors, define the performance objectives, describe the resources to be used, outline the operational procedures and outline the monitoring and reporting procedures which would demonstrate the achievement of the objectives.

### **4. Format of the environmental review document**

The environmental review should be provided to the DEP officer for comment. At this stage the document should have all figures produced in the final format and colours.

Following approval to release the review for public comment, the final document should also be provided to the DEP in an electronic format.

The proponent is requested to supply the project officer with an electronic copy of the environmental review document for use on Macintosh, Microsoft Word Version 6, and any scanned figures.

Where possible, figures should be reproducible in a black and white format.

### **5. Contents of the environmental review document**

The contents of the environmental review should include an executive summary, introduction and at least the following:

## 5.1 The proposal

A comprehensive description of the proposal including its location (address and certificate of title details where relevant) is required.

### **Justification and alternatives**

- justification and objectives for the proposed development;
- the legal framework, including existing zoning and environmental approvals, and decision making authorities and involved agencies; and
- consideration of alternative options (including a ‘no development’ option).

### **Key characteristics**

The Minister’s statement will bind the proponent to implementing the proposal in accordance with any technical specifications and key characteristics<sup>1</sup> in the environmental review document. It is important therefore, that the level of technical detail in the environmental review, while sufficient for environmental assessment, does not bind the proponent in areas where the project is likely to change in ways that have no environmental significance.

Include a description of the components of the proposal, including the nature and extent of works proposed. This information must be summarised in the form of a table as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> Changes to the key characteristics of the proposal following final approval, would require assessment of the change and can be treated as non-substantial and approved by the Minister, if the environmental impacts are not significant. If the change is significant, it would require assessment under section 38 or section 46. Changes to other aspects of the proposal are generally inconsequential and can be implemented without further assessment. It is prudent to consult with the Department of Environmental Protection about changes to the proposal.

**Table 1: Key characteristics (example only)**

<b>Element</b>	<b>Description</b>
Life of project (mine production)	< 5yrs (continual operation)
Size of ore body	682 000 tonnes (upper limit)
Area of disturbance (including access)	100 hectares
List of major components <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pit</li> <li>• waste dump</li> <li>• infrastructure (water supply, roads, etc)</li> </ul>	Refer plans, specifications, charts section immediately below for details of map requirements
Ore mining rate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maximum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 200 000 tonnes per year</li> </ul>
Solid waste materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maximum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 800,000 tonnes per year</li> </ul>
Water supply <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• source</li> <li>• maximum hourly requirement</li> <li>• maximum annual requirement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• XYZ borefield, ABC aquifer</li> <li>• 180 cubic metres</li> <li>• 1 000 000 cubic metres</li> </ul>
Fuel storage capacity and quantity used	Litres; litres per year
Heavy mineral concentrate transport <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• truck movements (maximum)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 75 return truck loads per week</li> </ul>

### **Plans, Specifications, Charts**

Adequately dimensioned plans showing clearly the location and elements of the proposal which are significant from the point of view of environmental protection, should be included. The location and dimensions (for progressive stages of development, if relevant) of plant, amenities buildings, accessways, stockpile areas, dredge areas, waste product disposal and treatment areas, all dams and water storage areas, mining areas, storage areas including fuel storage, landscaped areas etc. Only those elements of plans, specifications and charts that are significant from the point of view of environmental protection are of relevance here.

Figures that should always be included are:

- a map showing the proposal in the local context - an overlay of the proposal on a base map of the main environmental constraints;
- a map showing the proposal in the regional context; and, if appropriate
- a process chart / mass balance diagram showing inputs, outputs and waste streams.

The plan/s should include contours, a north arrow, a scale bar, a legend, grid co-ordinates, the source of the data, and a title. If the data is overlaid on an aerial photo then the date of the aerial photo should be shown.



**Other logistics**

- timing and staging of project; and
- ownership and liability for waste during transport, disposal operations and long-term disposal (where appropriate to the proposal).

**5.2 Environmental factors**

The environmental review should focus on the relevant environmental factors for the proposal, and these should be agreed in consultation with the WA EPA and DEP and relevant public and government agencies. Preliminary environmental factors identified for the proposal are shown in Part A of these guidelines.

Further environmental factors may be identified during the preparation of the environmental review, therefore on-going consultation with the WA EPA, DEP and other relevant agencies is recommended. The DEP can advise the proponent on the recommended WA EPA objective for any new environmental factors raised. Minor matters which can be readily managed as part of normal operations for the existing operations or similar projects may be briefly described.

Items that should be discussed under each environmental factor are:

- a clear definition of the area of assessment for this factor;
- the WA EPA objective for this factor;
- a description of what is being affected - why this factor is relevant to the proposal;
- a description of how this factor is being affected by the proposal - the predicted extent of impact;
- a description of where this factor fits into the broader environmental / ecological context (only if relevant - this may not be applicable to all factors);
- a straightforward description or explanation of any relevant standards / regulations / policy;
- environmental evaluation - does the proposal meet the WA EPA's objective as defined above;
- if not, environmental management proposed to ensure the WA EPA's objective is met; and
- predicted outcome.

The proponent should provide a summary table of the above information for all environmental factors, under the three categories of biophysical, pollution management and social surroundings:

**Table 2: Environmental factors and management (example only)**

<b>Environmental Factor</b>	<b>WA EPA Objective</b>	<b>Existing environment</b>	<b>Potential impact</b>	<b>Environmental management</b>	<b>Predicted outcome</b>
<b>BIOPHYSICAL</b>					
Vegetation community types 3b and 20b	Maintain the abundance, species diversity, geographic distribution and productivity of vegetation community types 3b and 20b	Reserve 34587 contains 45 ha of community type 20b and 34 ha of community type 3b	Proposal avoids all areas of community types 20b and 3b	Surrounding area will be fully rehabilitated following construction	Community types 20b and 3b will remain untouched  Area surrounding will be revegetated with seed stock of 20b and 3b community types
<b>POLLUTION MANAGEMENT</b>					
Dust	Ensure that the dust levels generated by the proposal do not adversely impact upon welfare and amenity or cause health problems by meeting statutory requirements and acceptable standards	Light industrial area - three other dust producing industries in close vicinity  Nearest residential area is 800 metres	Proposal may generate dust on two days of each working week.	Dust Control Plan will be implemented	Dust can be managed to meet WA EPA's objective
<b>SOCIAL SURROUNDINGS</b>					
Visual amenity	Visual amenity of the area adjacent to the project should not be unduly affected by the proposal	Area already built-up	This proposal will contribute negligibly to the overall visual amenity of the area	Main building will be in 'forest colours' and screening trees will be planted on road	Proposal will blend well with existing visual amenity and the WA EPA's objective can be met

### 5.3 Environmental management commitments

The implementation of the key characteristics of the proposal and the environmental management commitments made by the proponent become legally enforceable under the conditions of environmental approval issued in the statement by the Minister for the Environment. All the auditable environmental management commitments should be consolidated in the public review document in a list (usually in an Appendix). This list is attached to the Minister's statement and becomes part of the conditions of approval.

The proponent's compliance with the consolidated environmental management commitments will be audited by the DEP, so they must be expressed in a way which enables them to be audited.

A commitment needs to contain most (if not all) of the following elements to be auditable:

- who (eg. the proponent)
- will do what (eg. prepare a plan, take action)
- why (to meet an environmental objective)

- where/how (detail the action and where it applies)
- when (in which phase, eg. before construction starts)
- to what standard (recognised standard or agency to be satisfied)
- on advice from (agency to be consulted).

The proponent may make other ‘commitments’, which address less significant or non-environmental matters, to show an intention to good general management of the project. Such ‘commitments’ (or management strategies/policies) would not be included in the consolidated list of environmental management commitments appended to the statement.

Continuous improvement during the implementation of the consolidated commitments may necessitate changes whilst ensuring the environmental objective is still achieved; these can be made in updates to the environmental management plan. Modified and/or additional proponent commitments arising from the fulfilment of environmental conditions will be audited by the DEP and should follow the accepted format.

Once the proposal is approved under a statement of conditions, any proposed modifications or additional commitments should be referred to the WA EPA for consideration of the environmental impacts. Such changes to the consolidated list of commitments would normally be dealt with through the audit process; however, if significant impacts are involved, the proposed changes may constitute a change to the proposal which would require assessment.

Examples of the preferred format for typical commitments are shown in the following table:

**Table 3: Summary of proponent’s commitments (example only)**

<b>Who/What <u>Commitment</u></b>	<b>When plan prepared <u>Timing</u></b>	<b>Why <u>Objective</u></b>	<b>How/Where <u>Action</u></b>	<b>Whose advice <u>expert consulted</u></b>	<b>Evidence Standard Compliance criteria</b>
1. The Proponent will develop and implement a rehabilitation plan	before construction commences	to protect the abundance, species diversity, geographic distribution and productivity of the vegetation community types 3b and 20b (fig 3.1, EMP)	by limiting construction to 10 ha of Reserve 34587 and rehabilitating the area	on advice of CALM.	similarity rating of rehab’d area consistent with vegetation community types 3b and 20b.
2. The Proponent will prepare and implement a dust control plan	before the start of construction	to minimise dust generation and impact on nearby land owners	by measures such as watering roads and monitoring wind direction	preparation of the plan on advice of DEP.	1000mg/m3 (WA EPA Dust Control Criteria)

Commitments should preferably be written in tabular format, preferably with some specification of ways in which the commitment can be measured, or how compliance can be demonstrated.

Draft commitments, whether in textual or tabular format, which are not in a format that can be audited will not be accepted by DEP assessment officers for public review documentation.

Proponents will be assisted to revise inadequate commitments.

## **5.4 Public consultation**

A description should be provided of the public participation and consultation activities undertaken by the proponent in preparing the environmental review. It should describe the activities undertaken, the dates, the groups/individuals involved and the objectives of the activities. Cross reference should be made with the description of environmental management of the factors which should clearly indicate how community concerns have been addressed. Those concerns which are dealt with outside the WA EPA process can be noted and referenced.

## **5.5 Other information**

Additional detail and description of the proposal, if provided, should go in a separate section.

## **Attachment 1**

*The first page of the proponent's environmental review document must be the following invitation to make a submission, with the parts in square brackets amended to apply to each specific proposal. Its purpose is to explain what submissions are used for and to detail why and how to make a submission.*

### **Invitation to make a submission**

The Environmental Protection Authority (WA EPA) invites people to make a submission on this proposal.

[the proponent] proposes [the rezoning of land and the development of a Marina Complex in the City of Bunbury]. In accordance with the WA *Environmental Protection Act*, a [PER] has been prepared which describes this proposal and its likely effects on the environment. The [PER] is available for a public review period of [8] weeks from [date] closing on [date].

Comments from government agencies and from the public will help the WA EPA to prepare an assessment report in which it will make recommendations to government.

### **Why write a submission?**

A submission is a way to provide information, express your opinion and put forward your suggested course of action - including any alternative approach. It is useful if you indicate any suggestions you have to improve the proposal.

All submissions received by the WA EPA will be acknowledged. Submissions will be treated as public documents unless provided and received in confidence subject to the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act, and may be quoted in full or in part in the WA EPA's report.

### **Why not join a group?**

If you prefer not to write your own comments, it may be worthwhile joining with a group interested in making a submission on similar issues. Joint submissions may help to reduce the workload for an individual or group, as well as increase the pool of ideas and information. If you form a small group (up to 10 people) please indicate all the names of the participants. If your group is larger, please indicate how many people your submission represents.

### **Developing a submission**

You may agree or disagree with, or comment on, the general issues discussed in the [PER] or the specific proposals. It helps if you give reasons for your conclusions, supported by relevant data. You may make an important contribution by suggesting ways to make the proposal more environmentally acceptable.

When making comments on specific elements of the [PER]:

- clearly state your point of view;
- indicate the source of your information or argument if this is applicable;
- suggest recommendations, safeguards or alternatives.

### **Points to keep in mind**

By keeping the following points in mind, you will make it easier for your submission to be analysed:

- attempt to list points so that issues raised are clear. A summary of your submission is helpful;
- refer each point to the appropriate section, chapter or recommendation in the [PER];
- if you discuss different sections of the [PER], keep them distinct and separate, so there is no confusion as to which section you are considering; and
- attach any factual information you may wish to provide and give details of the source. Make sure your information is accurate.

Remember to include:

- your name;
- address;
- date; and
- whether you want your submission to be confidential.

The closing date for submissions is: **[date]**

Submissions should be addressed to:

The Environmental Protection Authority  
Westralia Square  
141 St George's Terrace  
PERTH WA 6000

Attention:      Juliet Cole

## **Attachment 2**

### **Advertising the environmental review**

The proponent is responsible for advertising the release and arranging the availability of the environmental review document in accordance with the following guidelines:

#### **Format and content**

The format and content of the advertisement should be approved by the DEP before appearing in the media. For joint State-Commonwealth assessments, the Commonwealth also has to approve the advertisement. The advertisement should be consistent with the attached example.

Note that the DEP officer's name should appear in the advertisement.

#### **Size**

The size of the advertisement should be two newspaper columns (about 10 cm) wide by about 14 cm long. Dimensions less than these would be difficult to read.

#### **Location**

The approved advertisement should, for CER's, appear in the news section of the main local newspaper and, for PER's and ERMP's, appear in the news section of the main daily paper's ("The West Australian") Saturday edition, and in the news section of the main local paper at the commencement of the public review period and again two weeks prior to the closure of the public review period.

#### **Timing**

Within the guidelines already given, it is the proponent's prerogative to set the time of release, although the DEP should be informed. The advertisement should not go out before the report is actually available, or the review period may need to be extended.

## Example of the newspaper advertisement

SCM CHEMICALS LTD  
Consultative Environmental Review  
EXTENSION TO DALYELLUP RESIDUE DISPOSAL PROGRAM  
(Public Review Period: [date] to [date])

SCM Chemicals Ltd is planning to extend the company's existing residue disposal program at Dalyellup, south of Bunbury, from March 1992 to March 1993.

A Consultative Environmental Review (CER) has been prepared by the company to examine the environmental effects associated with the proposed development, in accordance with Western Australian Government procedures. The CER describes the proposal, examines the likely environmental effects and the proposed environmental management procedures.

SCM has prepared a project summary which is available free of charge from the company's office on Old Coast Road, Australind.

**Copies of the CER may be purchased for \$5 from:**

**SCM Chemicals Ltd**  
**Old Coast Road**  
**AUSTRALIND WA 6230**  
**Telephone: (08) 9467 2356**

Copies of the complete Consultative Environmental Review will be available for examination at:

- Environmental Protection Authority  
Library Information Centre  
8th Floor, Westralia Square  
38 Mounts Bay Road  
PERTH WA 6000
- City of Bunbury public libraries
- Shire of Capel libraries
- Shire of Harvey library (Australind)
- Shire of Dardanup (Eaton)
- Environmental Protection Authority  
65 Wittenoom Street  
BUNBURY WA 6230

Submissions on this proposal are invited by [closing date]. Please address your submission to:

Chairman  
Environmental Protection Authority  
8th Floor, Westralia Square  
141 St Georges Terrace  
PERTH WA 6000  
Attention: [Juliet Cole]

If you have any questions on how to make a submission, please ring the project officer, [Project Officer name], on (08) 9222 7xxx.