

the removal of native vegetation, and the offsets required will be relatively generic.

Medium and high risk proposals are subject to a more rigorous assessment process. The new decision making criteria in relation to these proposals feature tests of whether reasonable steps have been taken to ensure that impacts of the proposed removal of native vegetation have been minimised. In relation to high risk proposals, the key decision making criterion is likely to be 'whether the native vegetation makes a significant contribution to Victoria's biodiversity'.

At this stage, a number of important supporting documents and information are missing and there are issues with the resolution of the online location risk maps.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA by Anthony Graham

Western Australia's first uranium mine

Toro Energy Ltd (Toro) has received federal environmental approval to develop its proposed Western Australian uranium mine. The proposal, to develop two open-pits 30km south of Wiluna, received the approval of the Western Australian Government last year. Once developed, the mines would be Western Australia's first uranium mines. The Federal Minister for Environment, the Hon Tony Burke MP, approved the proposal subject to compliance with 36 conditions of approval, which include requirements restricting radiation exposure to humans, plants and animals, and protecting ground and surface water. It has been reported that following the decision, Toro will move toward financing and final project investment determinations, with first production anticipated for late 2015.

Rosslyn Hill Mining permitted to recommence lead carbonate transport

Following the approval of management and monitoring plans, the Office of the Environmental Protection Authority has allowed Rosslyn Hill Mining, formerly known as Magellan Metals, to recommence its transportation of lead carbonate through Fremantle Port. Magellan Metals stopped transporting and producing the product in April 2011 following contamination concerns. Rosslyn Hill Mining will be able to transport its lead carbonate subject to strict conditions, including the product being moved in sealed, double laminated, water-proof and sieve-proof bags, kept inside sealed containers, the company having

an independent inspector reviewing all bags and shipping containers, ongoing sampling, and the company having an Emergency Response Plan and \$5m bank guarantee for circumstances where the plan was not implemented properly.

Port Hedland's waste to be turned into energy

Western Australia's first large scale 'waste-to-energy' facility has been approved by the Western Australian Minister for Environment, the Hon Albert Jacob MLA. The facility, which has been proposed by New Energy Corporation Pty Ltd, would take non-hazardous commercial, industrial and domestic waste and convert those products into certain forms of energy such as heat, steam or 'synthetic gas'. At full production, it is estimated that the facility would process 255,000t of waste, and produce 18.5MW of electricity (of which, 15.5MW could be exported into the grid), annually. The facility is to be developed in Port Hedland, in northern Western Australia.

Woodside's James Price Point liquefied natural gas plant rethought

Woodside Petroleum will no longer pursue the development of its proposed liquefied natural gas plant at James Price Point in northern Western Australia. In April 2013, the company stated that the proposed development did not meet its commercial requirements for final investment decision. The company has stated that it is considering other types of facilities to develop gas from its Browse fields, including floating liquefied natural gas facilities, existing Pilbara based facilities and a smaller onshore development. Western Australian Premier, the Hon Colin Barnett MLA, expressed disappointment at the decision to shelve the development.

Despite Woodside's decision, a challenge against the Western Australian Government's approval of the proposal, lodged by the Wilderness Society in the Supreme Court of Western Australia, remains on foot. The matter was heard on 5 June 2013.

Western Australian public sector reforms

Reforms to the Western Australian public sector have seen the Department of Environment and Conservation split into two departments. In April 2013, the Government announced that the department was to be replaced with a Department of Parks and Wildlife and a Department of Environmental Regulation. The Minister for Environment said the reforms would provide a clear divide between

the management and conservation of Western Australian marine, parks and wildlife environment and the 'role of environmental regulator'. The reforms also saw the Marine Parks Reserves Authority and the Conservation Commission joined into a single authority, the 'Conservation and Parks Commission'.

Department of Mines and Petroleum implements new requirements to submit online

From 1 July 2013, mining companies required to submit Annual Environmental Reports for their Western Australian operations will have to do so online using the Department of Mines and Petroleum online system. Companies are required to submit Annual Environmental Reports only where it is included as a condition of their tenements. The Minister for Mines and Petroleum, the Hon Bill Marmion MLA, said that the requirement that the reports be submitted online would 'provide the public with easily accessible information on how resource companies are responding to their environmental responsibilities.'

New guidelines and strategic policy regarding water in mining

The Department of Water has issued a new set of guidelines, describing how mining proponents are able to meet their water-related regulatory requirements for projects administered under the *Mining Act 1978* (WA). The new *Western Australian Water in Mining Guideline* builds on the guidance set out in the *Pilbara water in mining guideline*, released in 2009. The Department also released a new policy directed at non-mining third-party reuse of mine dewatering surplus, which has traditionally been discharged into watercourses or injected into aquifers. The new policy is known as: *Strategic policy 2.09: Use of mine dewatering surplus*.

EPA recommendations

The Western Australian Environmental Protection Authority has made a number of positive, but conditional, recommendations to the Western Australian Government. These approvals include:

- a six-pit mineral sands operation near Dongara
- a commercial algae farm, the proposal for which was resubmitted with significant amendments intended to mitigate certain environmental impacts

- a 20m tonne per annum iron ore port, which is said to minimise environmental impacts by removing the need for dredging and instead using a 1.5km trestle jetty and barges to deliver iron ore to ships
- a marina and tourism district near Rockingham.

Each of the above proposals require state, and in some cases federal, environmental approval before construction commences.