

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, WATER AND THE ENVIRONMENT

MS20-900080

To: Minister for the Environment (For Decision)

EPBC ACT - MAJOR PROJECTS - SECOND TRANCHE


Timing: 12 June 2020 - to enable discussions with jurisdictions and announcement on 15 June 2020.

Recommendations:

1. Agree to the second tranche of six 'Major Projects' that will be considered under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Agreed / Not agreed
2. Agree to the proposed three levels of service delivery commitments for the first and second tranche of Major Projects to bring these projects online as fast as possible.

Agreed / Not agreed

Minister: 

Date: 12/6/20

Comments:

Clearing Officer: Sent 12/6/2020	Declan O'Connor-Cox	A/g Assistant Secretary, Environment Approvals Division	Ph: 6274 2969 Mob: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
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Key Points:

1. You have been asked by Cabinet to bring forward a second tranche of Major Projects to will help stimulate Australia's economic recovery in the context of COVID-19. These projects will be identified in consultation with relevant ministers and with states and territories (**MS20-900078** refers).
2. In February 2020, you agreed to the first tranche of nine Major Projects that are of economic or strategic significance (MS20-000073 refers). You are now being asked to agree to an additional 6 Major Projects listed at **Attachment A**.
 - a. These are Main Roads Priority Projects (WA), Perth Airport (WA), Inland Rail (Vic, NSW, Qld), Coffs Harbour Bypass (NSW), M12 (NSW) and Sydney Metro (Western Sydney Airport Rail link) (NSW).

Proposed handling of 'major projects' subject to assessment under the EPBC Act

Overview

As part of implementing the Government's congestion busting agenda in relation to environmental approvals, the Department proposes to manage a small number of the most nationally-significant projects as 'major projects'. Assessment of these projects will be afforded the highest priority and will be resourced and managed with a view to ensure key decisions are made within agreed timeframes.

The Department will recommend projects for 'major project' status to you for approval and will provide regular reports to you on the Department's performance in managing the major projects.

Recommendation of major projects to you will be based on an evaluation against agreed criteria which focuses on economic contribution and strategic significance of the projects (see below).

What is the proposed initial set of major projects?

The Department's proposed initial list of major projects comprises:

- Santos NSW (Eastern) Pty Ltd's Narrabri Gas Project, NSW
- Woodside Energy Limited's Burrup Hub (Browse Offshore LNG development and the Karratha Gas plant extension), WA
- BHP's Olympic Dam expansion, SA
- Rio Tinto's suite of iron ore projects in the Pilbara, WA
- NSW emergency town water projects
- Snowy 2.0

See **Appendix A** below for further details on the nominated projects and other significant projects.

What are major projects and why is it necessary to limit their number?

The Department proposes to prioritise and appropriately resource the assessment and approval of six projects which are the most nationally-significant and critical due to their economic contribution and strategic significance.

The proposed limit on the number of major projects will minimise the administrative burden of managing major projects. It also recognises the constraints on the Department's capacity to provide such a significant level of resourcing for any larger number of projects. Major projects are typically more complex projects, requiring close and regular work with proponents and state/territory agencies. The projects will also often involve a high level of legal risk which requires extensive engagement with the Department's General Counsel and AGS.

As a consequence, there will be a number of other projects that will not be afforded major project status but which are still significant projects in their own right (see **Appendix B**). The Department's objective for these projects will be to manage resources, work closely with proponents, and prioritise efforts towards improving performance to meet statutory timeframes.