

Public record pursuant to s. 39 of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*

Proposal title: Port of Port Hedland Zone 5 Bypass Channel Project

Proposal description: The proposal is for capital dredging of a bypass navigation channel to the east of Zone 5 of the existing shipping channel within the Port of Port Hedland. The proposal is intended to maintain vessel transit, should an unlikely grounding incident occur in Zone 5 of the channel.

Key construction elements of the Proposal include dredging of up to 800,000 cubic metres of seabed material within a total disturbance of 162 hectares (ha) (63 ha being within WA State waters). It is noted that the disposal of dredge material to an approved spoil ground is located outside of WA State waters (located in within Commonwealth (port) waters).

Proposal location: Port of Port Hedland

APP number: APP-0035028

Date referral received: 17-04-2026

Date more information received: Not applicable

Referrer: Pilbara Ports Authority

Proponent: Pilbara Ports Authority

Potential significant effects:

There are potential impacts on: **benthic communities and habitats** from direct (permanent) loss and indirect (recoverable) losses associated with dredging, **marine environmental quality** from potential contaminant release from sediments and elevated suspended sediments during dredging and **marine fauna** from elevated underwater noise, entrainment and collision during dredging and loading/transport of dredged material.

Environmental factors: benthic communities and habitats, marine environmental quality and marine fauna.

Public comment on referral information:

Does the proposal need further assessment due to its potential significant impacts?

Yes 0 No 0

If the proposal requires further assessment, should the EPA include further opportunities for public review?

Yes 0 No 0

Total submissions: 0

Decision: s. 38G(1) – Not assess – No advice given

Summary of reasons pursuant to s. 38G(1)(c)

The EPA has decided not to assess the proposal because:

- The EPA considers the likely environmental effects of the proposal are not so significant or unmitigated as to warrant formal assessment under Part IV of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* (EP Act).
- The EPA's decision has been made on the basis of the proponent implementing the proposal in accordance with the Proposal Content Document and the referral documentation.

- *Benthic communities* - The proposal occurs in an area of benthic communities and habitat (BCH) of predominantly bare sand, with areas of sparse and low-density invertebrate communities. The proposal will impact BCH through the permanent loss of 1.1 hectares (ha) of sparse or low-density invertebrates in the zone of high impact and through indirect (recoverable) impacts to 4 ha of invertebrates (filter-feeding communities) and up to 8.1 ha of mixed communities within the zone of moderate impact. This level of impact is localised and small when considered in the context of the designated local assessment unit; and is unlikely to reduce the extent of either of these communities within the local assessment unit to an extent that would affect the ecological integrity or biological diversity of BCH in the area.
- Cumulative impacts to BCH have been considered, specifically with respect to historic losses within the local assessment unit. Given the short duration and extent of dredging activities, no adverse long-term impacts to BCH are expected in a cumulative context, and the proposal is not expected to contribute to cumulative impacts in the area.
- *Marine Environmental Quality* - Sediments contain low concentrations of contaminants and the area experiences seasonally high levels of turbidity and sedimentation primarily associated with weather events. The proposal has the potential to impact marine environmental quality (MEQ) through disturbance of potentially contaminated sediments and elevated suspended sediment concentrations as a result of dredging activities. MEQ is predicted to return to a high level of ecological protection within one month of the cessation of dredging ensuring environmental values are protected. Implementation of the Dredging Environmental Monitoring and Management Plan should ensure the expected outcome is achieved and is likely to be consistent with the EPA's objective for MEQ.
- *Marine Fauna* - The proposal occurs within biologically important areas for humpback whale, flatback turtle, green turtle, hawksbill turtle and loggerhead turtle for the purposes of migration, nesting and foraging. While the proposal occurs within known biologically important areas for conservation significant species, the EPA considers the temporary impacts from dredging and vessels movements of a limited duration, can be mitigated with the implementation of specific measures outlined in the proponent's Dredging Environmental Monitoring and Management Plan, so that there would be no:
 - collisions with marine mammals
 - entrainment of marine turtles
 - introduction of marine pests
 - impact to important habitats.
- The EPA notes that the activity of loading and transporting dredged material from State waters, and disposal within Commonwealth waters, is regulated by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water through a permit under the *Environmental Protection (Sea Dumping) Act 1981* (Sea Dumping Act). The EPA notes that the assessment of sea dumping permits considers the quality of dredged material, suitability of disposal location, the extent of potential impacts, and the measures required to monitor and minimise those impacts.

- The EPA does not consider that the proposal impacts will combine or interact in a holistic way which requires assessment by the EPA.

Material information considered by the EPA in this decision

The EPA has considered the following material information in making its decision:

- Referral (17 April 2026)
- Referral supporting document (April 2026) and technical appendices:
- EP Act s 3, s 4, Part IV, Admin Procedures, EPA factor and technical guidance

Appeals: There are no rights of appeal under the EP Act in respect of this decision.



Darren Walsh

Chair

Delegate of the Environmental Protection Authority

Date: 08 May 2026