

Media Statement

20 July 2026

Proposed low-emissions iron pilot not to be formally assessed by EPA

A proposal within the Rockingham Industrial Zone to develop a pilot plant that manufactures lower-emissions iron will not be subject to an environmental impact assessment under Part IV of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986 (EP Act)*.

[Project NeoSmelt](#) proposes to construct and operate a research and development plant that will combine Direct Reduced Iron technology with Electric Smelting Furnace capability as an alternative to conventional blast furnace ironmaking.

Today the independent Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) has published its [decision not to formally assess](#) the Patterson Road project, stating that it considered any likely environmental effects could be mitigated by other statutory decision-making processes.

EPA Chair Darren Walsh said in determining not to assess the proposal, a detailed evaluation had been undertaken and further information had been sought from the proponent, government agencies and subject-matter experts.

Mr Walsh said the issues raised in the two submissions made during the EPA's seven-day public comment period had also been analysed.

"The proposal involves minimal clearing of flora and vegetation and any impacts from noise or air emissions can be managed under *Environmental Protection (Noise) Regulations 1997* and Part V of the *EP Act*," he said. "And any clearing of native vegetation associated with the proposal may require obtaining a native vegetation clearing permit, which includes opportunities for public input."

The NeoSmelt Joint Venture (BlueScope Future Technologies Pty Ltd) comprises BHP, BlueScope, Mitsui Iron Ore Development, Rio Tinto and Woodside Energy.

According to BlueScope, the pilot plant is expected to produce up to 49,000 tonnes of iron annually.

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