

***Media Statement***

***20 January 2026***

## **EPA delivers report on West Kimberley gas exploration proposal**

The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) has completed its assessment of the Bennett Resources Pty Ltd proposal to construct up to 20 exploration and appraisal wells in the Canning Basin.

The [Valhalla Gas Exploration and Appraisal Program](#) was referred to the EPA in accordance with regulation 2C of the *Environmental Protection Regulations 1987* which requires referral of all onshore oil and gas exploration and production proposals involving hydraulic fracture stimulation.

Today the EPA has [published its report](#) for the Minister for the Environment, recommending the proposal may be implemented subject to comprehensive conditions that require the proponent to meet a suite of environmental outcomes that protect the quality of groundwater and other key environmental values.

EPA Chair Darren Walsh said the proposal assessed by the independent Authority was limited to exploration and appraisal and was not for the purpose of producing or processing petroleum products such as natural gas.

He said if a commercially viable resource was identified and targeted for extraction, the proponent would be required to seek additional approvals under both Federal and State Government legislation, and refer the proposal to the EPA.

“We consulted extensively during this environmental impact assessment,” Mr Walsh said. “The more than 8000 submissions we received during the eight-week public review last year were considered by the EPA and responded to by the proponent.

“The EPA recognises the critical role of groundwater protection in this proposal to mitigate potential risks in a way that maintains public confidence, he said.

“To this end we have recommended conditions that require a number of peer-reviewed programs to be approved prior to the commencement of drilling to ensure the required environmental outcomes are met.

“The strict checks and balances we have recommended build further on the structure of the conditions.

“These additional conditions are essentially a series of gates that mean an extra layer of monitoring and data gathering at a project scale to confirm environmental outcomes are met on a staged basis as the proposed exploration progresses.

“We are satisfied that based on the information and expert advice we have considered during this assessment, that any associated risks to the environment remain low, and that the conditions we have recommended, along with those imposed under other regulatory processes would ensure that any unforeseen or unpredicted impacts will be identified early in the process and avoided.”

The proposal is within Petroleum Exploration Permit EP 371, about 120km south-east of Derby, and will require a disturbance area of 112 hectares.

The majority of the disturbance footprint is located within the Yungngora (Noonkanbah) People Native Title determination area and the remainder is within the Warlangurru People Native Title determination area. The proponent has an Indigenous Land Use Agreement in place with the Yungngora people and a Land Access and Use Agreement in place with the Warlangurru people.

“At my invitation, representatives from both these Traditional Owner groups came to a recent EPA meeting and addressed all members,” Mr Walsh said. “We also visited the proposal area and the Noonkanbah community last year and acknowledge the broad support for the proposal by the Yungngora and Warlangurru people.”

The EPA report also noted the significant concern expressed through public submissions regarding the potential future cumulative impacts should petroleum activities in the area intensify.

“If future growth of the petroleum industry in the Canning Basin is likely, we recommend the Minister consider a regional environmental assessment framework to ensure cumulative impacts are appropriately addressed,” Mr Walsh said.

The EPA’s assessment also considered the findings and recommendations of the Independent Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracture Stimulation. While an enforceable Code of Practice remains outstanding, the EPA report notes the State Government’s commitment that hydraulic fracturing exploration activities will not proceed until a strengthened regulatory framework is in place.

The EPA’s report to the Minister for the Environment is now open for a three-week public appeal period, closing 10 February 2026. Appeals should be directed to the [Office of the Appeals Convenor](#). The Minister will make the final decision on the proposal. EPA Report 1800 can be found on the [EPA website](#).

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