

## **FOLLOW-UP ON THE UTILITY OF EIA GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS**

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### **Key Points**

EIA guidance materials do build capacity and enhance EIA outcomes.

A follow-up survey of 20 environmental consultants in Western Australia showed that EIA guidance materials appear to have generally met the Environmental Protection Authority's (EPA) purposes. Specifically they have:

- allowed for better environmental protection to occur;
- increased the certainty of outcome of EIA for proponents;
- enhanced the consistency of advice given to Government;
- permitted proposals to be planned and designed to meet guidance principles from the outset, with no surprises; and
- provided a clearer basis for Government decision-making.

Consultants used EIA guidance in the following ways:

- As a reference point to determine the significance and sensitivities that a project will be subject to;
- To determine the likely acceptability of elements of a proposal;
- To determine the EPA's thinking in relation to certain aspects of the environment;
- To justify the approach of the EPA on a particular aspect of the environment to a proponent; and
- As an aid in the preparation of EIS documents.

Suggestions to improve the utility of future guidance materials for environmental consultants, and further enhance EIA capacity building include:

- provide greater clarification of the purpose of EIA guidance and make the 'core' guidance component of these documents more explicit;
- develop guidance only on those issues of major environmental significance;
- increase industry input during EIA guidance development; and
- reduce the length of time that EIA guidance documents remain in 'Draft' status.