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Western Green Energy Hub: Ambitious hydrogen plan to get full EPA review



Matt Mckenzie The West Australian
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Caves in the Nullarbor Plain. Credit: Stefan Eberhard; Save the Nullarbor



Environmental regulators will take a close look at a giant proposed green power and hydrogen project on the Nullarbor, amid concerns the \$100 billion plan will crush the local ecosystem.

The Western Green Energy Hub is an ambitious development in Western Australia's South East corner with an enormous price tag and huge intended site covering 2 million hectares. That would be progressively built over decades.

Backed by Intercontinental Energy, the hub would use thousands of wind turbines and solar arrays to produce green hydrogen.

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But there have been concerns about the impact on the environment [since The West Australian first revealed the proposal had been lodged with regulators earlier this month.](#)

On Monday, the Environmental Protection Authority confirmed it would undertake a full review of the proposal.

The hub is just the latest ambitious hydrogen project floated in WA. Those projects have so far faced an uphill battle as production of the green fuel is yet to become commercially viable in the State.



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Developments by Fortescue at Uaroo, BP at Geraldton, and Woodside Energy at Kwinana have either been paused or the investment decisions delayed.

EPA chair Darren Walsh said the Western Green Energy Hub was complex and needed detailed assessment.



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He said the plan would affect marine life, clear 27,188 hectares of land and impact the limestone system below ground, among other consequences.

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WGEH chief executive Ray MacDonald said the company was “fully aligned” with the EPA on the planned level of assessment.

“WGEH will play a role in reducing the impacts of climate change by generating clean energy without the need for greenhouse gas emissions and negative environmental effects,” he said.

Mr MacDonald also welcomed the Federal tax incentive to support local hydrogen production through the Future Made in Australia initiative.



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📷 Caves in the Nullarbor Plain Credit: Stefan Eberhard; Save the Nullarbor

“With our Stage 1 (final investment decision) and financial close presently scheduled for 2029, we have the lead-in time to both frame our investment options and to undertake

the nominated advanced studies.”

Environmental group Save the Nullarbor has previously warned the project would mean “Australia’s largest limestone cave system is under threat”.

“The Nullarbor Plain is a nature hotspot with outstanding universal values,” co-founder Stefan Eberhard said.

“It is the world’s largest arid limestone karst system, which includes a spectacular hidden world of ancient caves and rock holes of staggering dimensions, beauty, scientific values, and priceless cultural importance.”

Dr Eberhard said hundreds of ancient caves and thousands of blow holes would be put at risk.

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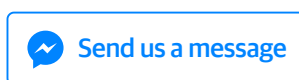
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