Frequently Asked Questions

BHP

Smelter Refinery Expansion (SRE) Project Environmental Impact Statement

About the Project

What is the Smelter Refinery Expansion (SRE) Project?

The SRE Project is a proposed expansion of BHP's existing smelter and refinery facilities at Olympic Dam. If approved, it would increase copper processing and production capacity and support Copper SA's vision of creating a globally significant mine-to-metal copper province in South Australia.

Why is the project needed?

Global demand for copper is expected to increase significantly as the world transitions to increased renewable generation technologies such as wind farms, increased electrification across end-use sectors and products such as electric vehicles, and increased digital transformation and deployment of artificial intelligence. The project would enable Olympic Dam to process additional copper concentrate from Olympic Dam, Carrapateena and Prominent Hill, and potential future operations such as Ankata.

How much copper will the project produce?

The project has the potential to increase copper production capacity from the current average of around 200,000 tonnes per annum to up to 650,000 tonnes per annum, along with gold, silver and sulphuric acid production.

Will the project create jobs?

Yes. Construction is expected to support up to approximately 1,300 jobs at peak construction, with additional permanent operational roles required once the expanded facilities are operating. The project is also expected to create opportunities for local businesses and suppliers.

What is an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)?

An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is a detailed assessment of a project's potential environmental, social and economic impacts. It examines both positive and negative effects and identifies measures to avoid, reduce or manage impacts.

Why is the project being assessed through an EIS?

The South Australian Government declared the project an "Impact Assessed Development", which is the highest level of development assessment under the Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act. This requires a comprehensive EIS and public consultation process.

How can I provide feedback?

Members of the public can review the EIS during the formal exhibition period and make submissions to the State Government. BHP is also holding community information sessions and providing opportunities to ask questions and seek further information.

Air Quality and Radiation

Will the project affect air quality in Roxby Downs or Andamooka?

Air quality modelling was undertaken for nearby communities, including Roxby Downs and Olympic Dam Village. The modelling found predicted levels of particulate matter, sulphur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide remain below applicable assessment criteria at all nearby sensitive receptors.

Will the project produce dust?

Construction and operational activities have the potential to generate dust. Existing dust management measures and additional controls such as enclosed handling systems, covered conveyors and dust suppression will be used to minimise impacts.

Will the project increase radiation exposure to the community?

A radiological assessment was completed as part of the EIS. It found predicted public radiation doses remain well below the recognised public dose limit, and potential impacts to plants and animals are also below accepted assessment thresholds.

Greenhouse gas emissions

Is the project expected to produce more greenhouse gas emissions?

A detailed greenhouse gas emissions assessment was completed as part of the EIS which included processes and measures to reduce the increased operational greenhouse gas emissions (Scopes 1 and 2 emissions) as part of the project. For more information on BHP's climate-related targets and goals, refer to the BHP Annual Report 2026, Operating and Financial Review 9.10 - Climate change and Sustainability Report.

Water

Will the project use more water?

Yes. Additional water will be needed to support expanded operations. However, the project includes water efficiency measures such as recycling and recovery systems designed to reduce overall water demand.

Will more water be taken from the Great Artesian Basin?

No. The project does not propose additional abstraction from the Great Artesian Basin above current operational volumes. Future water requirements are expected to be met primarily through the proposed Northern Water Project and existing water infrastructure.

Will the project affect groundwater?

Assessments found the project is not expected to result in significant groundwater impacts. Existing monitoring programs will continue throughout the life of the operation.

Land, Biodiversity and Heritage

How much land will the project disturb?

The project is expected to disturb approximately 235 hectares of land. Much of the development is located within or adjacent to existing mining and industrial areas.

Will the project impact threatened species?

Ecological studies found no threatened ecological communities within the project footprint and no impacts to critical habitat for threatened species. Potential impacts to vegetation and habitat were assessed and are not expected to result in significant impacts at a regional level.

What is being done to protect Aboriginal heritage?

BHP is engaging with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal representative organisations throughout the approvals process. Cultural heritage assessments have informed project planning, and heritage management procedures will be implemented throughout construction and operation.

Community and Traffic

Will there be more traffic on local roads?

The project will increase the movement of workers, equipment and materials. Traffic assessments found the existing road network can accommodate forecast traffic levels. Traffic management plans and regulatory approvals will be required for heavy and oversized loads.

Will the project affect emergency services?

The EIS identified increased demand on emergency and health services as a potential social impact. BHP proposes to continue providing onsite medical and paramedic services and work closely with emergency services to manage potential impacts.

How will the project benefit local communities?

The project is expected to support employment, local procurement, business opportunities and economic activity across the Far North, Upper Spencer Gulf and South Australia. Continued investment in community programs and stakeholder engagement is also proposed.

Will workers live in Roxby Downs?

The EIS assessment assumes a predominantly fly-in fly-out workforce for construction and operations. BHP will continue to work with local communities and stakeholders to manage potential social impacts associated with workforce growth.