



Ministerial Submission

MS25-000998

FOR ACTION - Major Project Status Approvals October 2025

TO: Minister for Industry and Innovation; Minister for Science
CC: Assistant Minister for Science, Technology and the Digital Economy

TIMING

Routine.

Recommendation

- That you **approve** Major Project Status for:

- s22 [Redacted]

[Redacted] Approved Not approved

- [Redacted]

[Redacted] Approved Not approved

- [Redacted]

[Redacted] Approved Not approved

- WA1 Resources Ltd – Luni Niobium Project (see Attachment D).

[Redacted] Approved Not approved

- That you **sign** and date the letters to approved proponents, relevant Commonwealth Ministers, State Premiers and Chief Ministers (see Attachment E).

[Redacted] Signed Not signed

<p>s22</p> <p>Signature</p>	<p>Date: 14/11/2025</p>
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KEY POINTS

- The department recommends awarding Major Project Status (MPS) to 4 projects that have been assessed as nationally significant and aligned to the Albanese Government's priorities.
- MPS provides eligible proponents with tailored regulatory facilitation services to navigate government approvals. Awarding MPS signals the Government's in-principle support for a project but does not guarantee regulatory approval or commercial success.
 - a. As Minister for Industry and Innovation, you hold portfolio responsibility for the Major Projects Facilitation Agency (MPFA) and are the decision-maker for awarding MPS, following MPFA's assessment against eligibility criteria and consultation across the Government and with relevant state and territory governments.
 - b. The MPFA operates as a facilitation support service without enabling legislation or ministerial guidelines. It was established to meet private sector demand for assistance navigating regulatory approvals and a single-entry point to government.
- To be eligible for MPS, a project must:
 - a. Be of strategic national significance with capital investment exceeding A\$50 million.
 - b. Face complex regulatory approvals under Australian government legislation.
 - c. Demonstrate financial capacity to complete regulatory approvals and reasonable commercial viability.
- The MPFA is separate to the Investor Front Door initiative which has been modelled on the MPS eligibility criteria for consistency. The department is working with the Department of the Treasury to support engagement and consideration of major projects by both initiatives during the pilot phase of the Investor Front Door.

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WA1 Resources Ltd – Luni Niobium Project (new MPS application)

- Luni Niobium Project is a globally significant critical mineral development located in Western Australia. The project hosts a large and significant grade of niobium (220 million tonnes at 1.0 per cent Nb₂O₅, 53 million tonnes at 2.2 per cent Nb₂O₅). Luni Niobium Project will contribute to Australia’s mining initiative focused on the development of ferroniobium, a critical input for High Strength Low Alloy steels used in automotive, shipbuilding, and construction sectors.
- The proponent is currently unable to provide defined annual output or forecast average revenues. s47
and expects the project to generate 508 construction jobs and 350 direct operational jobs at full capacity.
- s47 , the project clearly exceeds the A\$50 million threshold. The quality of the resource and WA1’s financial position provides a high degree of confidence in the project’s commercial viability.
- The MPFA recommends you approve WA1 Resources MPS (assessment at Attachment D):
 - a. **Criteria One** (National Significance) – aligned with the Australia Critical Minerals Strategy 2023-2030. The project will contribute to a competitive niobium industry that benefits Western Australia and Australian economy and positions Australia as a global significant producer of niobium.
 - b. **Criteria Two** (Complex Regulatory Approvals) – the regulatory pathway for this project will span across jurisdictions, requiring engagement across the Commonwealth, Western Australian, and Northern Territory governments. s47

c. **Criteria Three** (Commercial Viability) - s47

—but sufficient

evidence has been provided to demonstrate the project has sufficient financial resources and is commercially viable.

NEXT STEPS

- Subject to your decision, draft letters at Attachment E notify successful project proponents of the award of MPS, Commonwealth Ministers, State Premiers and Chief Ministers of your decision.
- If you choose not to award MPS, the MPFA can provide the project proponent with more limited support through our general services offering (which provides short-term assistance to proponents of projects over \$20 million to help them to engage with regulators to resolve individual issues).

CONSULTATION

- Critical Minerals Office and other external regulators on matters including native title, environmental approvals (detailed in Attachments A, B, C and D).

Clearance Officer
Rodney Harris
Acting General Manager
Major Projects Facilitation
s22

Clearance date: 11/11/2025

Contact Officer
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Manager
Major Projects Facilitation Agency
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ATTACHMENTS

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D: Assessment: WA1 Resources Ltd – Luni Niobium Project

E: Letters to proponents, federal ministers and state premiers

Major Project Status Summary

Luni Niobium Project

WA1 Resources Ltd

Location: 80 kilometres northeast of the Kiwirrkurra Community, Western Australia	
Industry: Critical Minerals	CAPEX: s47
Project Lifespan: s47	
Construction Jobs: 508	Direct Jobs: 350
Application Type: New Major Project Assessment	

Recommendation

The Major Project Facilitation Agency (MPFA) considers the Luni Niobium Project meets the eligibility criteria and recommends the Minister consider awarding Major Project Status (MPS) for 3 years.

Project Summary

Luni Niobium Project (Luni) is a strategic mining initiative focused on the production of ferroniobium—an alloy of iron and niobium, used to strengthen steel. The Project is accessible via Kiwirrkurra and local tracks. s47 with a projected workforce of approximately 508 construction and 350 direct jobs.

This site is likely to be one of the first producers of niobium in Australia and represents a new industrial capability for the country.

Ferroniobium is a critical input for high strength low alloy steels used in automotive, shipbuilding, and construction sectors. The project is positioned to serve diverse international markets including Europe, North America, South Korea, Japan, and China, which collectively account for the majority of global niobium demand.

Current Project Status

WA1 Resources has provided the below milestones:

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WA1 have collected detailed survey data and baseline environmental and cultural heritage information to support high-quality environmental referrals and have commenced negotiations towards Mining Agreements with the determined Native Title holders.

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Geographical Location

Luni is located 490km south of Halls Creek, Western Australia.

Project Risks and Sensitivities

1. Due to the remoteness of the project, 490km south of Halls Creek which presents logistical challenges for infrastructure, water sourcing and environmental management.
2. The project is currently unable to provide defined annual production output and forecast average revenues. This introduces some uncertainty around the project's economic viability, however the quality of the resource and capital at WA1's disposal offsets this risk.

Due Diligence

The MPFA conducted a due diligence review on the company, directors s47 with no sensitivities identified. An ABN and ASIC registration has also been validated for WA1 Resources.

Criteria Assessment

Criteria 1	The project is of strategic significance to Australia.	Strong Alignment
<p>The Project's CAPEX is expected to be ^{s47} , which is above the A\$50 million threshold requested for Major Project Status. WA1 Resources is of strategic significance to Australia due with potential to deliver long-term economic and regional benefits to Western Australia and the Northern Territory.</p> <p>This site is likely to be one of the first producers of niobium in Australia and represents a new industrial capability for the country. Niobium is listed as a critical mineral in Australia.</p> <p>The Project is expected to generate 508 jobs during construction phase and approximately 350 direct jobs during operation.</p> <p>The project aligns with several State and Commonwealth policy initiatives including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian Critical Minerals Strategy 2023-2030 • WA Battery and Critical Minerals Strategy 2024-2023 • WA LNG Jobs Taskforce <p>WA1 is working in close partnership with the ^{s47} and local Indigenous communities to deliver tangible employment and training outcomes. Initiatives include:</p>		

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These efforts demonstrate a strong commitment to inclusive development, skills growth, and long-term community partnerships.

The MPFA considers sufficient evidence has been provided to demonstrate the project's strategic significance to Australia.

ATTACHMENT D

Criteria 2	The project is facing complex regulatory approvals challenges with Australian Government approvals.	General Alignment
<p>DCCEEW advised the MPFA that this bilateral agreement for EPBC referrals is not currently in effect. Consequently, the DCCEEW and WA Environment Protection Authority (EPA) processes are separate and distinct. This gap in regulatory alignment means WA1 may need to engage separately with both Commonwealth and State regulators, increasing the risk of conflicting timelines and delayed approvals.</p> <p>s22</p> <p>Although WA1 is yet to finalise its environmental surveys and confirm matters of national environment significance, s47</p> <p>s47</p> <p>The project's footprint and logistics introduce regulatory complexity across state and territory borders. s47</p> <p>This adds layers of regulatory oversight related to land use, transport, environmental impact, and precinct-specific requirements.</p> <p>The MPFA considers sufficient evidence has been provided to demonstrate complex regulatory approval challenges.</p>		

ATTACHMENT D

Criteria 3	The project has sufficient financial resources and is commercially viable.	General Alignment
<p>The financial metrics provided by WA1 Resources are highly sensitive and confidential. WA1 currently holds approximately A\$160 million in cash, following a successful A\$100 million capital raise in August 2025. These funds are being used to progress key pre-development and permitting workstreams including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction of a development airstrip • Installation of a +100-person accommodation camp and associated infrastructure • Upgrading to site access roads <p>WA1 advised the remaining estimated costs to complete the following government approvals required for the project will be funded by cash at bank:</p> <p>s47</p> <p>WA1 has attracted significant investment, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regal Funds Management, which owns approximately 10% of WA1 and is a major supporter of Australian mining developments, including De Grey Mining. • s47, two of the largest North American institutional investors, collectively owning approximately 20% of WA1. <p>WA1 Resources' corporate profile features an experienced board and executive team in finance, mining processing industry covering all facets of project development.</p> <p>The MPFA considers there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate the Project has sufficient financial resources and is commercially viable. s47</p>		

ATTACHMENT E – LETTERS FOR SIGNATURE

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WA1 Resources Ltd – letters to:

- s22, WA1 Resources Ltd
- The Hon Roger Cook MLA, Premier of Western Australia
- Senator the Hon Murray Watt, Minister for the Environment and Water
- The Hon Michelle Rowland MP, Attorney-General

**SENATOR THE HON TIM AYRES
MINISTER FOR INDUSTRY AND INNOVATION
MINISTER FOR SCIENCE**

MS25-000998

s22

WA1 Resources Ltd
Level 2, 437 Roberts Road
SUBIACO WA 6008

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Dear s22

Thank you for your application seeking Major Project Status (MPS) for the Luni Niobium project.

I am pleased to advise I have awarded Major Project Status for 3 years from the date of this letter. The decision to award the status was based on the WA1 Resources potential contribution to Australia's critical minerals industry.

I have written to the Hon Roger Cook MLA, Premier of Western Australia, and several of my ministerial colleagues advising them of my decision and to encourage their assistance with your project.

The awarding of MPS does not imply Australian Government endorsement of your project or guarantee its commercial success. Your project still needs to meet the requirements of the relevant Australian, Western Australia's regulatory, grant or funding approval processes.

Furthermore, the continuation of MPS is subject to a requirement that the project proponent, its directors, and officers continue to be fit and proper persons in compliance with the responsibilities of the project.

The Major Projects Facilitation Agency will be in contact with you regarding next steps.

I wish you well in your endeavours.

Yours sincerely

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TIM AYRES
14/11/2025

**SENATOR THE HON TIM AYRES
MINISTER FOR INDUSTRY AND INNOVATION
MINISTER FOR SCIENCE**

MS25-000998

The Hon Roger Cook MLA
Premier of Western Australia
Level 13, Dumas House
2 Havelock Street
WEST PERTH WA 6005

wa-government@dpc.wa.gov.au

Dear Premier

I am writing to inform you of my decision to approve Major Project Status (MPS) for the Luni Niobium project, proposed by WA1 Resources Ltd. My decision recognises the importance of the Project to Australia's critical minerals strategy.

The Luni project is a significant critical mineral development located in Western Australia. With an estimated ^{s47}, the project is expected to provide 350 direct jobs and 500 construction jobs. The project represents an opportunity for Australia to contribute to a competitive global niobium supply chain, benefiting the Western Australian and national economy.

MPS is valid for 3 years from the date of this letter. During this period, my department's Major Projects Facilitation Agency will facilitate and assist WA1 Resources Ltd to navigate Australian and state government approval processes.

Please note, the awarding of MPS does not imply Australian Government approval or guarantee the Project's commercial success. The project must still satisfy all relevant regulatory, grant, or funding approval requirements.

I have written to several of my ministerial colleagues regarding this decision and to encourage their assistance with this Project.

Yours sincerely

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TIM AYRES
14/11/2025

SENATOR THE HON TIM AYRES
MINISTER FOR INDUSTRY AND INNOVATION
MINISTER FOR SCIENCE

MS25-000998

Senator the Hon Murray Watt
Minister for the Environment and Water
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Senator.Watt@aph.gov.au

Dear Minister

I am writing to inform you of my decision to approve Major Project Status (MPS) for the Luni Niobium project, proposed by WA1 Resources Ltd. My decision recognises the importance of the Project to Australia's critical minerals strategy.

The Luni project is a significant critical mineral development located in Western Australia. With an estimated ^{s47}, the project is expected to provide 350 direct jobs and 500 construction jobs. The project represents an opportunity for Australia to contribute to a competitive global niobium supply chain, benefiting the Western Australian and national economy.

MPS is valid for 3 years from the date of this letter. During this period, my department's Major Projects Facilitation Agency will facilitate and assist WA1 Resources Ltd to navigate Australian and state government approval processes.

Please note, the awarding of MPS does not imply Australian Government approval or guarantee the Project's commercial success. The project must still satisfy all relevant regulatory, grant, or funding approval requirements.

Accordingly, WA1 Resources Ltd has identified the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* as relevant for this Project. The MPFA will engage with your department on the regulatory pathway of this MPS Project.

Yours sincerely

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TIM AYRES
14/11/2025

**SENATOR THE HON TIM AYRES
MINISTER FOR INDUSTRY AND INNOVATION
MINISTER FOR SCIENCE**

MS25-000998

The Hon Michelle Rowland MP
Attorney-General
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Michelle.Rowland.MP@aph.gov.au

Dear Attorney-General

I am writing to inform you of my decision to approve Major Project Status (MPS) for the Luni Niobium project, proposed by WA1 Resources Ltd. My decision recognises the importance of the Project to Australia's critical minerals strategy.

The Luni project is a significant critical mineral development located in Western Australia. With an estimated ^{s47}, the project is expected to provide 350 direct jobs and 500 construction jobs. The project represents an opportunity for Australia to contribute to a competitive global niobium supply chain, benefiting the Western Australian and national economy.

MPS is valid for 3 years from the date of this letter. During this period, my department's Major Projects Facilitation Agency will facilitate and assist WA1 Resources Ltd to navigate Australian and state government approval processes.

Please note, the awarding of MPS does not imply Australian Government approval or guarantee the Project's commercial success. The project must still satisfy all relevant regulatory, grant, or funding approval requirements.

Accordingly, WA1 Resources Ltd has identified the *Native Title Act 1993* as relevant to this project. The MPFA will engage with your department on the regulatory pathway of this MPS Project.

Yours sincerely

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TIM AYRES
14/11/2025