

What is the difference between an S&EIR and a BAR?

The National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) provides for two assessment processes that can be used to conduct an environmental impact assessment (EIA):

1. The basic assessment report (BAR)
2. A scoping and environmental impact report (S&EIR), also often referred to as a full EIA.

The scoping phase of the S&EIR is done to provide detail on the baseline environment of a project, and to identify potential impacts and feasible and reasonable alternatives. It also sets the plan of study for the environmental impact report, which includes a selection of specialist studies.

A BAR process is usually conducted for activities with a lower threshold than those activities triggered in the S&EIR process; this does not mean, however, that either process is conducted in a less vigorous manner. A BAR is merely a scoping and environmental impact assessment process collapsed into one and should contain all the information necessary for the competent authority to make a decision on the application. The scoping exercise in a full EIA determines what that information should be.

The reason the BAR process was followed in the Fairbreeze application, was as a result of the numerous studies and investigations conducted on the mining blocks over an extended period of approximately 13 years. Consequently, impacts associated with the project had already been identified. It was unnecessary to undertake a separate scoping phase, as the information available meant the BAR process would be appropriate in the circumstances. Effort could therefore be put into assessing these impacts, including the cumulative impacts in the studies undertaken.

The assessment requirements of the BAR are not dissimilar to those required for the environmental impact report (EIR).