



AVONBANK PROJECT

ENVIRONMENT EFFECTS STATEMENT

FACTSHEET NO. 3

ENVIRONMENT EFFECTS STATEMENT PROCESS

The *Environment Effects Act 1978* may require a proposed development to assess potential environmental impacts or effects before it is approved. The purpose of this assessment is to provide Ministers, local government, and statutory authority decision-makers the ability to make an informed decision if a project with potentially substantial environmental consequences should proceed.

As a part of this process, the Minister for Planning may decide an **Environment Effects Statement (EES)** is required. The EES provides an analysis of the significance of the potential effects of the proposed development:

- ◆ effects on individual environmental and social assets – magnitude, extent and duration of change in the values of each asset;
- ◆ probability of adverse effects, including those caused indirectly as a result of proposed activities, and associated uncertainty of predictions or estimates;
- ◆ proposed avoidance or mitigation measures to reduce predicted effects;
- ◆ residual effects and their significance, assuming the proposed measures to avoid and mitigate environmental effects are implemented; and
- ◆ the approach to managing and monitoring environmental performance and contingency planning.

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) manages the process, applying Ministerial guidelines that state the procedures and conditions. The project proponent prepares the EES and undertakes the necessary investigations. Once completed, the EES is released for public comment, and the Minister provides an Assessment to the relevant decision-makers for consideration.

As a part of preparing the EES, the proponent also implements a Consultation Plan to inform potentially affected individuals and groups, and to provide avenues for input throughout the preparation of the EES. This assists in determining areas of concern, potential effects, and to receive feedback on project design options or possible mitigation measures. In addition, the public can provide written comments on the draft scoping requirements early in the process, and on the final EES documentation, with the possibility of a verbal submission if an inquiry is appointed.

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What is in an EES?

- ◆ A description of the project
- ◆ An outline of public and stakeholder consultation carried out during investigations and the issues raised
- ◆ A description of the potentially affected environment
- ◆ Predictions of the project's environmental effects and alternatives
- ◆ Proposed measures to avoid or mitigate adverse effects
- ◆ A proposal for monitoring and managing effects during the project's operation

What is the EES Process?

1. Minister decides if an EES is required
2. Minister sets scoping requirements for EES studies
3. Proponent prepares the EES
4. Public review: exhibition of the EES and lodgment of submissions
5. Minister makes an Assessment
6. Decision-makers consider the Assessment in determining approval for the project

For more information visit www.planning.vic.gov.au/environment-assessment/

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AVONBANK PROJECT EES

In 2019 the Victorian Minister for Planning announced an EES was required to assess the Avonbank Project, and identified the following key environmental effects to be addressed:

- ◆ land uses of the site and surrounding areas, including the implications for agricultural productivity;
- ◆ land stability, erosion and soil productivity associated with the construction and operation of the project, including progressive rehabilitation works;
- ◆ effects of project construction and operation on air quality, noise and visual amenity of nearby sensitive receptors (particularly residences);
- ◆ surface water environments, including local waterways and the broader catchment, as well as groundwater (hydrology, quality, uses and dependent ecosystems);
- ◆ solid and liquid waste that might be generated by the project during construction and operation;
- ◆ both positive and adverse socio-economic effects, at local and regional scales, potentially generated by the project, including increased traffic movement and indirect effects of the project construction workforce on the capacity of local community infrastructure;
- ◆ biodiversity and ecological values within and in the vicinity of the site, and associated with adjacent road reserves and crown land, including native vegetation, listed threatened ecological communities and species of flora and fauna, and other habitats values; and
- ◆ Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultural heritage values.

The project was also assessed as requiring approval under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). Issues to be addressed under the EPBC Act were incorporated into the EES requirements (the **Scoping Requirements**), under a bilateral agreement between Victoria and the Commonwealth, allowing a single assessment document (the EES) to be developed by WIM, overseen by a Technical Review Group (TRG) of relevant regulatory agencies coordinated by DELWP. The full Avonbank Scoping Requirements document can be found at www.planning.vic.gov.au/environment-assessment/referrals-and-decisions.

Work completed

In anticipation of some requirements for an EES, work commenced in 2018 to identify potential environmental and social impacts associated with the construction and operation of the project. This initially required identification of existing ('baseline') conditions on relevant issues, with some data collected over more than one year. Now largely completed, baselines are established for:

- ◆ Ground and surface water conditions at the project site
- ◆ Air quality, and radiation and noise levels at the site
- ◆ Biodiversity
- ◆ Soils and landforms
- ◆ Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal heritage
- ◆ Economic and social conditions in the region
- ◆ Transport routes servicing the site
- ◆ Land use
- ◆ Planning requirements

Background studies result summaries are being prepared, and the impact assessment summaries will be prepared as those studies are finalised. These studies document the existing conditions at the project site, against which predicted potential impacts, positive and negative, from the project on environment and on social assets can be assessed. WIM commenced this work, which includes studies to quantify the project benefits on local and regional jobs and businesses, in mid-2020.

The Avonbank EES program

In 2019 WIM developed a formal Study Program to address the Scoping Requirements, investigating potential environmental effects of the Avonbank Project, and to identify any required mitigating measures. When complete the EES will go on public exhibition to allow all stakeholders to review and comment on the findings of these investigations. At the same time, WIM implemented a Stakeholder Engagement Strategy and program to inform stakeholders of the project, and to seek input on project design issues and other areas of concern.

Avonbank Project EES progress

