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REASONS FOR DECISION UNDER *ENVIRONMENT EFFECTS ACT 1978*

Title of Proposal: Gunbower Forest Environmental Watering Project - Hipwell Road Package of Works

Proponent: Goulburn Murray Water

Description of Project:

Goulburn Murray Water proposes to undertake a package of infrastructure and works in two stages to enable the controlled delivery of environmental flows to the Gunbower Forest, restoring a more natural water regime to achieve specific ecological objectives set under *The Living Murray Initiative*. The project will enable flooding of approximately 4,800 hectares of wetlands and floodplain within the Gunbower Forest (equivalent to a natural 38,000 ML/day flood).

Decision:

The Minister for Planning has decided that an Environment Effects Statement (EES) is not required for the Gunbower Forest Environmental Watering Project - Hipwell Road Package of Works, as described in the referral accepted on 5 January 2012, subject to the following conditions:

1. If the proponent intends to proceed with the Stage 2 works following an initial watering trial, prior to such works being implemented the proponent is to:
 - a. Prepare an assessment report in consultation with the Department of Sustainability and Environment and the Department of Planning and Community Development, which documents:
 - i. The options investigated for levees and floodways and the adjustments to these proposed works that may be needed to avoid or minimise adverse environmental effects;
 - ii. The likely environmental effects of relevant options, in particular on native vegetation, aquatic and riparian habitat values and any listed threatened species and communities;
 - iii. The final proposed location and design of the levees and floodways; and
 - iv. Incorporating an Environmental Management Plan that will ensure the implementation of measures to minimise the environmental effects from the Stage 2 works, including the mitigating and offsetting of impacts on native vegetation and habitat values.
 - b. Complete the assessment report to the satisfaction of the Secretary of the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

Reasons for Decision:

- With the exception of potential construction-related effects on native vegetation and threatened species outside the Gunbower Forest as a result of the Stage 2 works, any adverse environmental effects of the project are unlikely to be of high significance, and can be adequately addressed through required statutory processes, including under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, the *Water Act 1989*, the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*, and the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*, in combination with implementation of a suitable Environmental Management Plan.
- The potentially significant adverse effects on threatened species and native vegetation associated with construction activities for Stage 2 can be adequately addressed through a focussed assessment report and mitigation requirements, in accordance with conditions applying to this decision under the *Environment Effects Act 1978*.

Date of Decision: 20 April 2012