



Stakeholder and Community Engagement Plan

Goschen Mineral Sands and Rare Earths Project
21 January 2022

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1. Introduction

VHM Limited (VHM) is proposing to develop the Goschen Mineral Sands and Rare Earths Project (the Project) in the Loddon Mallee Region of Victoria, approximately 20 km south of Swan Hill (Figure 1-1). The Project will involve the mining and processing heavy mineral sands and rare earth minerals.

On 10 October 2018 the Minister for Planning determined that an Environment Effects Statement (EES) is required under the *Environment Effects Act 1978* for the Project.

The Project has further developed to that present to provide clearer definition of the mining operation, with refinement achieved in three key areas:

- reduction in mining to two areas, known as Area 1 and Area 3 and restriction to mining above water table
- fixing throughput to 5 Mtpa +/-10% and additional on-site processing of rare earth minerals
- water supply from Murray Darling system from Kangaroo Lake via a 37km pipeline to site that limits the capacity of the plant to approximately 5Mtpa.

This plan has been developed to guide how VHM will engage with the community and other stakeholders on the Project during the EES process, considering the following:

- Refinement of the project elements to what was presented in 2018 referral
- Extended time since last engagement
- Current and potential future COVID restrictions.

It outlines the approach to engaging with community members and other stakeholders and sets out the key activities for informing them about the Project and providing opportunities for input. The plan also sets out a process for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of engagement activities to ensure that they are meeting the needs of stakeholders and providing a range of opportunities to provide input.

1.1 Objectives

The objectives of this plan are to outline:

- Key principles which underpin the approach to stakeholder engagement on the Project.
- How potential Project stakeholders have been identified and who they are.
- Key issues raised by the community and other stakeholders during engagement conducted to date.
- How the community and other stakeholders have been, and will be, consulted on the Project during the EES process.
- The process for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement activities and incorporating stakeholder input into the EES.

1.2 Legislative context

The *Ministerial Guidelines for Assessment of Environmental Effects under the Environment Effects Act 1978* outline requirements for consultation during the preparation of an EES. Proponents are required to prepare and implement a consultation plan and to make this plan available to stakeholders.



This plan has been developed to guide engagement with the community and other stakeholders during the EES process for the Project. In the future it will be revised to address community and stakeholder engagement associated with mining activities as part of the mining licence and work plan approval process.

1.3 Project description

The Project will involve mining within the Goschen deposit and processing of heavy mineral sands at a throughput of 5Mtpa and produce a range of products including mixed heavy mineral concentrate (HMC), zircon concentrate, rutile product, leucoxene products, Ilmenite product, and rare earth products, over an estimated 20-year mine life.

The Project has been refined to ensure financial viability but has given consideration to minimising human health and environmental risks. The key aspects modified from the 2018 EES referral are as follows:

- Fixing ore throughput to 5Mtpa +/-10%, with additional mineral sands processing resulting in higher value rare earth products generated on-site and avoiding the need to transport radioactive classified material from the site
- Homogenising all tailings and processing waste into one stream, with placement back into the ore zone at levels that is comparable to background
- Sourcing the water supply from with Murray Darling Basin system from Kangaroo Lake via a 37km pipeline to site.

The Project can now show demonstrable efforts to avoid vegetation removal where possible, avoiding dewatering impacts (no mining below water table), and reducing air and noise emissions with limiting the mine footprint that is within VHM controlled land. It is also noted that the refined Project is in an area that has no culturally sensitive sites and a conclusion that a complex assessment(s) is not required.

Progressive rehabilitation will be undertaken throughout the life of mine with the aim of returning the land to a standard suitable for its pre-mining agricultural land use as soon as practicable.

The Project's mining and processing areas is presented in Figure 1-2.

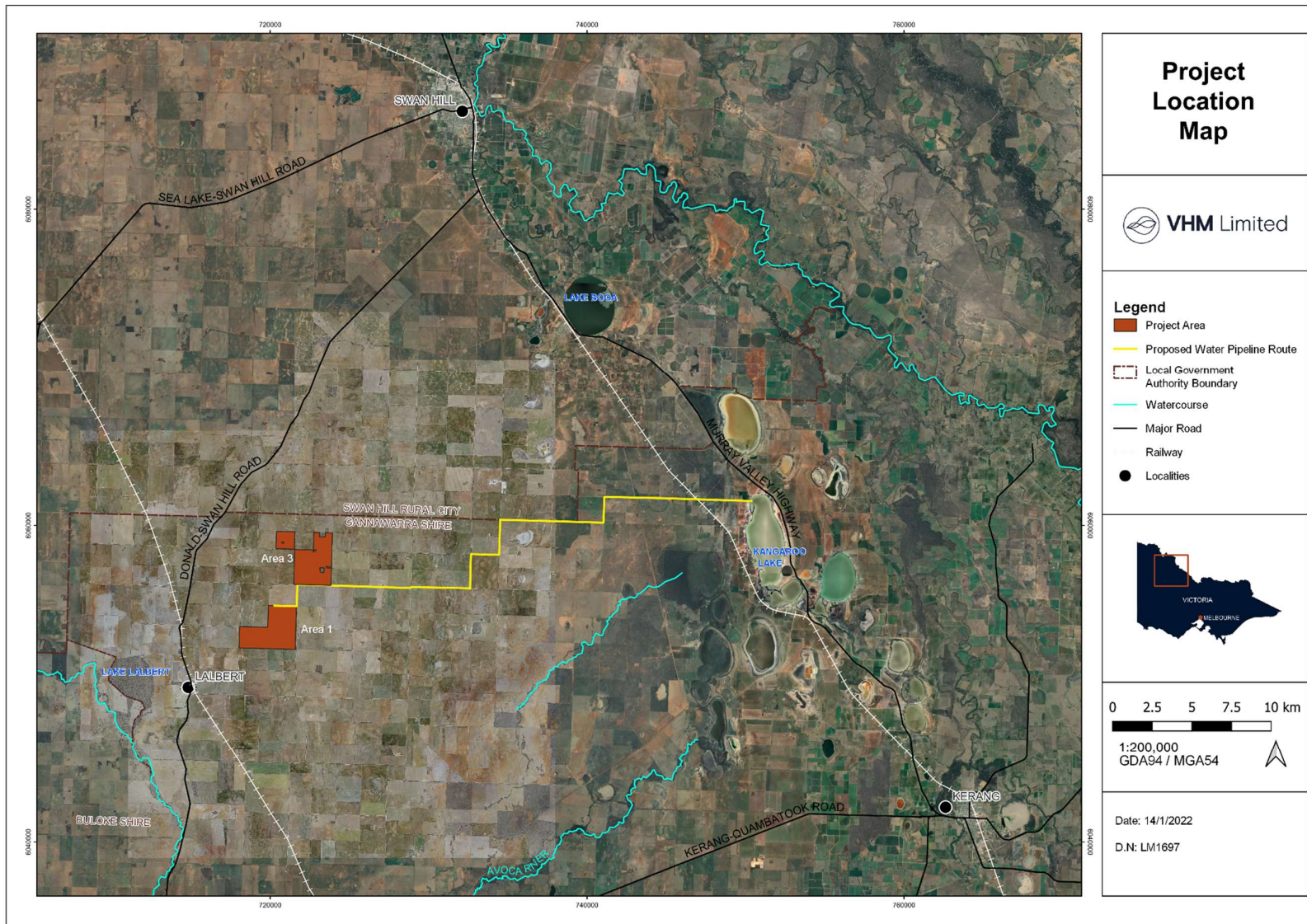


Figure 1-1 Goschen Mineral Sands and Rare Earths Project Location Map

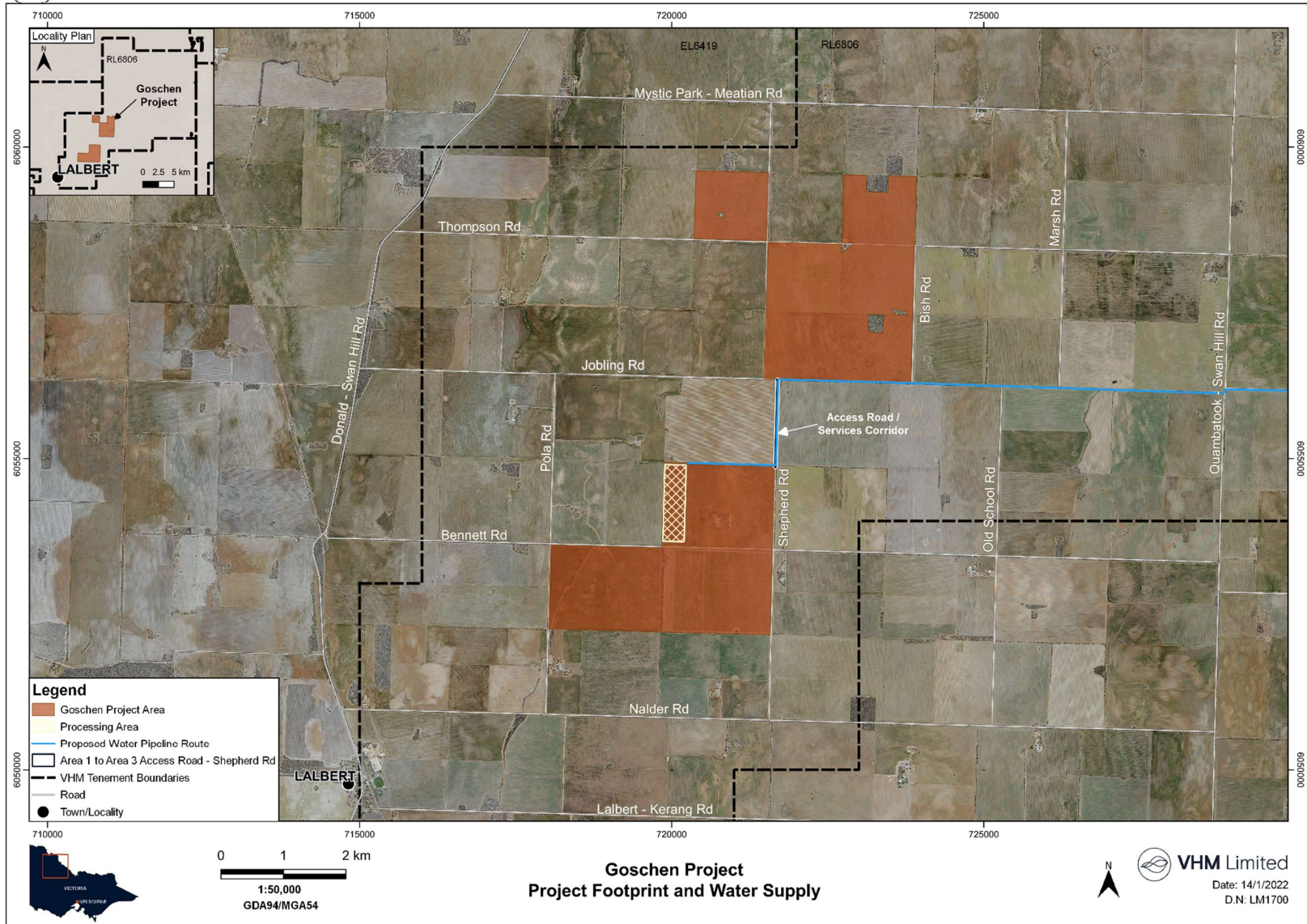


Figure 1-2 Goschen Mineral Sands and Rare Earths Project Footprint

2. Approach to stakeholder engagement

VHM is committed to maintaining open communication with community members and other stakeholders and to providing up to date and transparent information on the Project and EES process.

The stakeholder engagement approach is designed to adapt to the various phases of Project development and the EES process and to provide opportunities for:

- Informing the community and other stakeholders about the Project design and EES process.
- Consulting with community members and other stakeholders about the Project design, and scope, findings and mitigation measures proposed in draft technical studies being prepared for the EES.
- Involving community members and other stakeholders (through the Stakeholder and Community Reference Group) in discussions on community values and aspirations and potential community benefit projects.

3. Project stakeholders

This section outlines the key Project stakeholders for the EES process. These stakeholders were identified by VHM through a desktop assessment and an internal workshop. The term Project stakeholders is used to refer to members of the community and other stakeholders who have the potential to be directly or indirectly affected by the Project, have an interest in the Project and / or an ability to influence its outcome. The list of Project stakeholders is likely to grow as the Project moves through the EES process. An initial list of Project stakeholders is provided in Table 3.1 and further details are provided in Appendix A.



Table 3.1 Project stakeholders

Stakeholder group	Stakeholders	Uses and Values of the Environment	Environmental Factors	Key Concerns
Federal government regulatory authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Environment and Energy • Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency • Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade • Murray Darling Basin Authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commonwealth government policy • Environmental approvals process • Sustainable development of mineral resources • Economic benefit of the project to the Commonwealth • Retention of environmental values • Consideration of environmental offsets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flora and vegetation • Terrestrial fauna • Surface water • Groundwater • Historical heritage • Cultural heritage • Traffic and transport • Radiation • Land use planning • Socioeconomic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct and indirect disturbance to nationally significant flora and fauna populations • Reduction in availability or quality of surface water or groundwater • Potential impacts to Aboriginal cultural heritage • Potential increase in public health risks as a result of radiation from storage or transport of mineral product
State government regulatory authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) • Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR) • Environment Protection Authority (EPA) • Department of Premier and Cabinet • Department of Health and Human Services • Department of Transport • Transport for Victoria • Regional Roads Victoria • Agriculture Victoria • First Peoples – State Relations • North Central CMA • WorkSafe • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State government policy • Environmental approvals process • Sustainable development of mineral resources • Economic benefit of the project to the State • Community engagement • Employment • Regional infrastructure development • Retention of the environmental value and amenity of the region • Consideration of environmental offsets • Availability of water supply • Community engagement • Fire safety, prevention and management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flora and vegetation • Terrestrial fauna • Surface water • Groundwater • Air quality and Greenhouse gas • Noise • Traffic and transport • Radiation • Historical heritage • Cultural heritage • Land use planning • Socioeconomic • Soils and rehabilitation • Tailings and geotechnical stability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct and indirect disturbance to conservation significant flora and fauna populations • Reduction in availability or quality of surface water or groundwater • Potential for effects to public amenity or health as a result of air emissions • Potential increase in public health risks as a result of radiation from storage or transport of mineral product • Potential impacts to Aboriginal cultural heritage • Potential detriment to future land value and utilisation due to poor rehabilitation. • Risks to the environment and community as a result of increased fire risk.



Stakeholder group	Stakeholders	Uses and Values of the Environment	Environmental Factors	Key Concerns
Local government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gannawarra Shire Council Swan Hill Rural City Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Availability of employment or business opportunities Diversification of local industry Availability and affordability of housing and short-term accommodation Retention of the rural character of the region Availability of good quality agricultural land Retention of the environmental value and amenity of the region Availability of water supply Community engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flora and vegetation Terrestrial fauna Surface water Groundwater Air quality Noise Traffic and transport Historical heritage Cultural heritage Radiation Visual impact and landscape Land use planning Socioeconomic Soils and rehabilitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in availability or quality of surface water or groundwater Potential for effects to public amenity or health as a result of air emissions Potential reduction in crop quality as a result of dust deposition Increase in traffic resulting in damage to roads or increased safety risk Affects to the landscape, visual amenity and character of region as result of mining infrastructure and landforms Potential detriment to future land value and utilisation due to poor rehabilitation Decline in property values Ensuring consultation with Swan Hill Rural City during EES process
Members of Parliament	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Federal members of Parliament Victorian members of Parliament 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government policy Availability of employment or business opportunities Diversification of local industry Availability and affordability of housing and short-term accommodation Retention of the rural character of the region Availability of good quality agricultural land Retention of the environmental value and amenity of the region Availability of water supply Community engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surface water Groundwater Air quality Noise Traffic and transport Historical heritage Cultural heritage Radiation Visual impact and landscape Land use planning Socioeconomic Agriculture Soils and rehabilitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in availability or quality of surface water or groundwater Potential reduction in crop quality as a result of dust deposition Increase in traffic resulting in damage to roads or increased safety risk Negative community or media response to project Potential detriment to future land value and utilisation due to poor rehabilitation. Decline in property values



Stakeholder group	Stakeholders	Uses and Values of the Environment	Environmental Factors	Key Concerns
Local residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landholders within the Project area Adjacent landholders Residents in surrounding areas (e.g., Lalbert, Kerang, Kunat, Goschen, Tresco, Swan Hill, Meatian, Quambatook, Bael) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Availability of employment or business opportunities Retention of family property and lands Fair compensation for land or land access Diversification of local industry Availability and affordability of housing and short-term accommodation Retention of the rural character of the region Availability of good quality agricultural land Retention of the environmental value and amenity of the region Availability of water supply 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surface water Groundwater Air quality Noise Traffic and transport Historical heritage Cultural heritage Radiation Visual impact and landscape Land use planning Socioeconomic Soils and rehabilitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in availability or quality of surface water or groundwater Impacts on recreational lakes Potential reduction in crop quality as a result of dust deposition Concern over compulsory access to land Concern over potential decline in property values Potential detriment to future land value and utilisation due to poor rehabilitation Increase in traffic resulting in damage to roads or increased safety risk Affects to the landscape, visual amenity and character of region as result of mining infrastructure and landforms
Traditional owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wamba Wamba people Barapa Barapa people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protection of cultural heritage Opportunities of engagement in project development and management Availability of employment or business opportunities Retention of the environmental value and amenity of the region Availability of water supply 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flora and vegetation Terrestrial fauna Surface water Groundwater Historical heritage Cultural heritage Visual impact and landscape Socioeconomic Soils and rehabilitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential impacts to Aboriginal cultural heritage Direct and indirect disturbance to conservation significant flora and fauna populations Reduction in availability or quality of surface water or groundwater Affects to the landscape, visual amenity and character of region as result of mining infrastructure and landforms Potential detriment to future land value and utilisation due to poor rehabilitation



Stakeholder group	Stakeholders	Uses and Values of the Environment	Environmental Factors	Key Concerns
Local businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural businesses • Irrigators/stock and domestic water users • Accommodation providers • Freight/logistics companies • Tourism businesses • Health services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of employment or business opportunities • Diversification of local industry • Availability and affordability of housing and short-term accommodation • Retention of the rural character of the region • Availability of good quality agricultural land • Retention of the environmental value and amenity of the region • Availability of water supply 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surface water • Groundwater • Noise • Air quality • Traffic and transport • Visual impact and landscape • Land use planning • Socioeconomic • Soils and rehabilitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in availability or quality of surface water or groundwater • Potential for effects to public amenity or health as a result of air emissions • Potential reduction in crop quality as a result of dust deposition • Increase in traffic resulting in damage to roads or increased safety risk • Affects to the landscape, visual amenity and character of region as result of mining infrastructure and landforms • Decline in property values • Potential detriment to future land value and utilisation due to poor rehabilitation
Community and environment groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community groups • Sporting groups • Environmental groups • Schools and training organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for engagement in the environmental management and monitoring process • Availability of employment or business opportunities • Retention of the environmental value and amenity of the region • Availability of water supply • Community engagement • Sponsorship opportunities and investment in community infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flora and vegetation • Terrestrial fauna • Surface water • Groundwater • Noise • Air quality • Traffic and transport • Historical heritage • Cultural heritage • Radiation • Visual impact and landscape • Land use planning • Socioeconomic • Soils and rehabilitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct and indirect disturbance to conservation significant flora and fauna populations • Reduction in availability or quality of surface water or groundwater • Potential for effects to public amenity or health as a result of air emissions • Increase in traffic resulting in damage to roads or increased safety risk • Potential impacts to the historical heritage of the region • Potential increase in public health risks as a result of radiation from storage or transport of mineral product • Potential detriment to future land value and utilisation due to poor rehabilitation



Stakeholder group	Stakeholders	Uses and Values of the Environment	Environmental Factors	Key Concerns
Utility / asset owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water Goulburn Murray Water Lower Murray Water Power utility providers Telecommunication providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utility infrastructure condition and capacity Resourcing for upgrade or improvements to utility infrastructure Availability of water supply 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surface water Groundwater Traffic and transport Land use planning Socioeconomic Soils and rehabilitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in availability or quality of surface water or groundwater Potential impacts of utility supply Resourcing for upgrade to utility infrastructure and services Increase in traffic resulting in damage to roads or increased safety risk Potential detriment to future land value and utilisation due to poor rehabilitation
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swan Hill Guardian ABC Mildura Gannawarra Times 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Availability of employment or business opportunities Retention of the rural character of the region Availability of good quality agricultural land Retention of the environmental value and amenity of the region Availability of water supply 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surface water Groundwater Air quality Noise Traffic and transport Radiation Socioeconomic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in availability or quality of surface water or groundwater Potential for effects to public amenity or health as a result of air emissions Increase in traffic resulting in damage to roads or increased safety risk Decline in property values Potential detriment to future land value and utilisation due to poor rehabilitation



3.1 Preliminary list of stakeholder issues

In stakeholder engagement conducted by VHM to date, a range of issues have been raised by community members and other stakeholders in relation to the Project. Below is a summary of the issues raised. This list will be updated as the Project moves through the EES process.

- Damage to local roads from increased heavy vehicle usage associated with the Project.
- Increased risk of bushfires due to operation of the Project.
- Amenity impacts for surrounding landholders during Project construction and / or operations.
- Ability to successfully rehabilitate the land to its previous land use.
- Impact on water supply and water quality for local landholders.

4. Engagement and implementation program

This section outlines the various engagement activities and tools to be implemented during the EES process and when they will be used.

4.1 Engagement activities and tools

A range of activities and tools will be implemented during the EES process to inform community members and other stakeholders about the Project and provide them with opportunities for input. These include formal and informal engagement activities designed to suit a range of different stakeholder needs. This section outlines the various engagement activities conducted and tools implemented to date, and to be used in the future as the Project moves through the EES process.

4.1.1 Key stakeholder briefings

Stakeholder briefings will continue to be held during the EES process to provide background information on the Project and the EES process, updates on the status of the Project and discuss any issues or concerns that stakeholders may have. These briefings will be held with individual or small groups of stakeholders such as local councils, traditional owners and / or Federal or State government members of Parliament.

4.1.2 Personal meetings

Personal meetings provide the opportunity for VHM and Project stakeholders to discuss any key issues or concerns in a one-on-one meeting and may be initiated either by VHM or the stakeholder. These meetings will continue to be held throughout the EES process with landholders to discuss issues such as land access and compensation. Meetings will be held with key regulatory stakeholders in relation to Project design, planning and implementation to ensure regulatory requirements are met. Personal meetings will also be held with the traditional owners, local businesses, State Government agencies and other interested groups.

4.1.3 Stakeholder and community reference group meetings

A Stakeholder and Community Reference Group has been re-established to provide a forum for open communication between VHM and Project stakeholders. In particular, the purpose of the group is to:

- Provide feedback on the design and development of the Project.



- Provide feedback on community attitudes and expectations.
- Provide feedback on the scope and draft findings of technical studies undertaken as a part of the EES.
- Suggest, workshop and develop potential community benefit projects.
- Provide feedback on stakeholder engagement for the Project.

The intention is for the group to maintain up to 10 members, which includes representation from local landholders and businesses, community groups and environmental groups, Gannawarra Shire and VHM. Members will be selected and invited by VHM based on feedback during broader community consultation. The aim is to have balanced representation across the community, therefore membership selection will consider relationship to the area, balance of age profile and balance of males and females.

Meetings of the group will be held approximately every two months and chaired by an independent facilitator. Members will have the option of raising agenda items for discussion. Meetings will be held in Kerang or Lalbert. If the Project is approved, it is intended to convene an Environment Review Committee (ERC) that will continue to meet during the construction, operational and rehabilitation phases of the Project. Community Reference Group members will have an opportunity to join the ERC.

4.1.4 Community information and feedback sessions

Community information and feedback sessions will continue to be held throughout the EES process to provide background information on the Project, explain the assessment process, outline the findings of draft technical studies being prepared for the EES and seek community input. The sessions will be run as community meetings and drop-in sessions in Kerang or Lalbert.

4.1.5 Project Update sheets and frequently asked questions

Community Project Updates and frequently asked questions (FAQs) will be developed during the EES process to respond to queries and comments raised at community information sessions, and informally through the project email address and one-on-one discussions. These documents will be made available at community information sessions and information displays and may be placed on the Project webpage. Key Project milestones and the status of community benefit projects will also be distributed to individual landholders, made available at community information sessions, information displays and may be made available on the Project webpage.

4.1.6 Advertisements

Advertisements will be published in local newspapers to notify the local community of upcoming engagement activities.

4.1.7 Project webpage

A Project webpage updated to provide background information on the Project and update Project stakeholders on key Project milestones as well the following:

- Portal to allow community and stakeholder feedback
- Useful links to relevant regulatory information.



4.1.8 Email and letter

A Project email address was established in June (community@vhmltd.com.au) that Project stakeholders can use to submit comments or queries. This email address will also be used to circulate community newsletters to Project stakeholders who have registered to receive these.

Letters will continue to be used to communicate directly with individual landholders and other Project stakeholders. For example, to request access to a property from landholders or arrange a one-on-one meeting with local councils or State government agencies. VHM will aim to respond to emails and letters promptly and confidentially, targeting a response timeframe of less than 48 hours.

4.1.9 Information displays

Information displays provide an opportunity to engage with community members who may not be aware of the Project or have a limited understanding of it, in an informal setting. Information will be made available on notice boards, in newsletters, fact sheets and FAQs in a public setting and people will be invited to speak with a representative from VHM and / or read information about the Project. Information displays will be used to provide background information on the Project and key Project milestones, and respond to queries and comments raised. These information displays will be placed in frequently attended places, such as the Lalbert Football Clubrooms, or local shopping centres.

4.1.10 Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Engagement

VHM will carry out targeted engagement in relation to Aboriginal cultural heritage in accordance with its *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Stakeholder Engagement Plan*. This engagement includes meetings with Aboriginal stakeholders and regulatory agencies throughout Project development and operation.

4.1.11 Recommencement of EES

VHM will carry out targeted engagement in relation to recommencement of the EES. This engagement includes meetings with key stakeholders and regulatory agencies to explain the changes and implications on those stakeholders.

4.1.12 COVID Management Practices

While this plan has been designed to prioritise face-to-face engagement, due to the potential for future COVID-19 social distancing restrictions, we can readily adapt to alternative engagement methods to ensure maximum involvement from all interested community members and stakeholders can be made possible, regardless of restrictions. This may include the use of a Virtual Consultation Room where project information, including an opportunity to participate in the EES process, can be undertaken online.

4.1.13 Overcoming barriers to participation

VHM will address participation barriers, particularly in the event of restrictions to face-to-face engagement, and maximise access through the following methods:

- Hard copy information about the EES and engagement opportunities will be delivered to all adjacent properties to the project site
- We will promote the consultation process regarding the EES on social media, advertising in local newspapers and newsletters
- We will make the face-to-face sessions highly accessible by varying the locations, times and ensuring we choose venues with universal access



- We will use a digital platform to provide specific information about the project and provide opportunities for feedback about potential impacts and areas of concern
- We will offer a hard copy alternative to the online material and will send copies as requested to people without computer access
- We will have support available to help people use the digital platform and participate with interactive online community sessions
- All project updates will be written in plain English
- Social media posts will be accessible, with appropriate alternative text included so that people with disabilities can access and understand the information being presented
- Easy read versions of project information will be available with images to support text, large font sizes and plenty of white space
- We will ensure that appropriate expenses will be paid to volunteers on the Community Reference Group (CRG).



4.2 Program for implementation

This section provides a high-level program for implementation of the various engagement activities and tools during the EES process (**Table 4.1**). It also outlines what aspects of the Project will be engaged on in the various phases of the EES.

Table 4.1 Stakeholder engagement implementation program

EES phase	Purpose of the engagement	What will be engaged on?	Potential engagement activities	Status
EES referral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce local community to VHM and inform them about the Project and likely assessment process Consult with regulatory authorities on approvals and assessment processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project design EES process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key stakeholder briefings Personal meetings Establish Stakeholder and Community Reference Group Advertisement Community information and feedback session Project webpage Email and letter updates 	<p>Completed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submitted 31 August 2018 EES Decision 10 October 2018
EES scoping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult with stakeholders and regulatory authorities on the scope of technical studies being prepared for the EES Receive input from community members of the draft EES scoping requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project design Scope of technical studies being prepared for the EES 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key stakeholder briefings Personal meetings Stakeholder and Community Reference Group meeting Advertisement Community information and feedback session Project webpage Email and letter updates Information display 	<p>Completed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final scoping requirements issued May 2019
EES preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform and seek input from community members and other stakeholders on draft findings of technical studies being prepared for the EES 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project design Community values and attitudes Potential project impacts and mitigation measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key stakeholder briefings Personal meetings Stakeholder and Community Reference Group meeting Advertisement Community information and feedback session Project webpage Email and letter updates Fact sheets and FAQs Community newsletter Information display 	<p>Commenced</p>



EES phase	Purpose of the engagement	What will be engaged on?	Potential engagement activities	Status
Public review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform the community and other stakeholders about how they can make a submission on the EES through the public review process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EES and associated technical appendices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal meetings Stakeholder and Community Reference Group meeting Advertisement Community information and feedback session Project webpage Email and letter updates Information display 	Pending
Minister's assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update community members and other stakeholder on the timing of the Minister's assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Next steps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal meetings Stakeholder and Community Reference Group meeting Advertisement Project webpage Email and letter updates 	Scheduled for 2023

5. Key messages

A number of key messages will be used in verbal and written communication with Project stakeholders during the EES process. Use of these key messages will assist in providing consistent information to Project stakeholders, and in raising awareness about the Project and how to provide input during the EES process. The key messages will be updated as the EES process progresses to ensure they focus on current aspects of the assessment process.

The Project

- VHM will source its water supply will be from the Murray Darling system from Kangaroo Lake via a dedicated 37km pipeline to site
- Results of metallurgical test work indicate that there are accumulations of rare earth minerals and zircon within the Goschen deposit.
- Rare earths are used for renewable technologies including hybrid and electric cars, medical equipment, communications, tablets and smartphones.
- Zircon is used for ceramics, paints, aerospace products, fuel cells, mobile phones and medical equipment.
- VHM will undertake processing of the rare earth minerals at Goschen to avoid the need to transport radioactive classified material off-site
- Preliminary radiological assessments indicate that the operation of the mine would be undertaken safety with no impacts to human health or ecological receptors
- VHM aims to start constructing the Project by 2024
- Preference will be given to employing local people, rather than fly-in fly-out workers



- VHM will have a special focus on engagement with Aboriginal groups and employment of aboriginal people.
- Local suppliers will be used wherever possible, including recruiting and training construction workers and using local businesses for operations support.

Mining and rehabilitation

- Only small areas of the target mineralisation zones will be mined and rehabilitated at a time.
- VHM has considerably scaled back the area of mining that will be assessed as part of the EES process in 2022.
- Since 2018 refinements to the project have achieved a reduced footprint, resulting in positive environmental outcomes, namely:
 - No interception of groundwater (all mining will be undertaken above groundwater table)
 - Significant native vegetation patches will be saved and cordoned off for protection
 - Mining operation life reduced from 30 years to 20 years
- Mining of rare earths and mineral sands is a continuous process of excavation and rehabilitation. As the land is cleared ahead of mining operations, the mined pits are backfilled and restored, and the vegetation is re-established behind the mine.

Assessment and approvals processes

- The Project requires assessment under Commonwealth (*Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*) and State (*Environment Effects Act 1978*) legislation. As an EES under Victorian legislation is required, the Federal Minister for the Environment accredited the EES process under the bilateral agreement between the Commonwealth and the State of Victoria.
- VHM will require a mining licence, work plan and work authority under State (*Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990*) legislation to construct, operate and close the Project. This process, along with the EES, replaces the need for the Planning Permit for the mining project. However, a Planning Permit may be required for some supporting buildings and works.
- Other approvals and permits will be required before mining can commence and must consider the Minister for Planning's EES assessment.
- VHM has commissioned a range of environmental, socioeconomic and cultural studies as a part of the EES for the Project. EES scoping requirements issued by the Minister for Planning determine the scope of these studies.
- There are a range of opportunities for the community to provide input on the Project during the EES process. These include attending information and feedback sessions, submitting comments or queries to the Project email address and making a submission on the EES scoping requirements and during the public review phase. Public hearings may also be carried out as part of the Ministers assessment of the Project.

6. Monitoring, evaluation and recording

This section outlines the process of monitoring, evaluation and recording stakeholder feedback on the Project during the EES process.



6.1 Monitoring and evaluation

Stakeholder engagement conducted as a part of the EES process will be regularly monitored and evaluated to ensure that it is meeting the needs of Project stakeholders and providing a range of opportunities for them to receive up to date information and provide input. The outcomes of this monitoring and evaluation will inform whether changes need to be made to the stakeholder engagement approach and / or engagement activities and tools. VHM will ensure that there are clear accountabilities within the company for the investigation and response to stakeholder engagement and to ensure continuous improvement of VHM's engagement strategy.

Monitoring will be undertaken to identify the extent to which Project stakeholders are accessing stakeholder engagement tools and attending events. This will involve monitoring the number of queries and comments received through the Project email address, visits to the Project webpage and attendees at community information sessions and Stakeholder and Community Reference Group meetings. In addition, VHM will monitor the number of submissions received on the draft EES scoping requirements and the EES.

Feedback will be requested from Project stakeholders on the approach to stakeholder engagement and the engagement activities to identify if they are meeting their needs. This will be done through feedback forms, informal feedback received by email or in one-on-one discussions, and through the Stakeholder and Community Reference Group.

6.2 Recording and capturing stakeholder input

It is anticipated that input received from Project stakeholders during the EES process will be used to inform a range of Project elements. Below is a brief description of each of these elements and how stakeholder input will be recorded:

- Project design: comments and concerns raised by Project stakeholders will be recorded in a comments register and issued to VHM's Project Manager for assessment and response.
- Stakeholder engagement approach, activities and tools: comments raised by Project stakeholders will be recorded in comments register and referred to VHM's communications advisor for assessment and response.
- Draft technical studies prepared for the EES: it is anticipated that Project stakeholders will provide a range of feedback that can be used to inform the scope, draft findings and mitigation measures of draft technical studies prepared for the EES. Feedback received will be recorded in comments registers and issued to the relevant specialist for assessment and response.
- Community benefit projects: comments and suggestions on potential community benefit projects for VHM investment will be recorded and considered by the Stakeholder and Community Reference Group, VHM's Community and Stakeholder Engagement Advisor and Managing Director.

Where appropriate, a direct response to a query or comment received will be provided to the stakeholder or community member. A consultation report will be prepared as a part of the EES which summarises the feedback received by Project stakeholders and how this was considered as part of the EES. This report will be made available when the EES is on exhibition as a part of the public review process. A number of systems are in place to enable community members and other stakeholders to provide feedback or express a concern about the Project. These include:

- Project email address: community@vhmltd.com.au
- Project phone number: 0429 462 524



6.3 Complaint monitoring and response

VHM will implement a complaint management process, which includes the following:

- Provision of a visible and user-friendly system for providing feedback. Information on how and where to provide feedback will be published on the VHM website and discussed during community engagement activities.
- Detailed feedback register
- Clear accountabilities and procedures for staff to investigate and respond to community feedback
- Commitment to respond promptly, fairly and confidentially to feedback received. VHM will target a response timeframe of less than 48 hours.
- An internal monitoring and auditing system to ensure effectiveness of the complaint management process, and to identify recurrent themes and appropriate management responses.

7. Benefit Sharing Program

VHM will develop a benefit sharing program that aims to create mutually beneficial outcomes for the community and VHM. This program will be led by feedback from the community and will commence early in the development stage of the Project. The program will include the following types of benefits throughout the Project development and operation:

- Local jobs and procurement
- Local infrastructure investment, such as improved roads and communications infrastructure
- Sponsorship and community benefit funds (grants) and/or legacy community benefit initiatives (long term programs or services)
- Neighbourhood benefit programs, such as screening vegetation, weed control programs, etc.



Appendix A - Stakeholder groups



Stakeholder Groups

Stakeholder Group	Stakeholders (Key members/organisations)
Federal and State Government members of Parliament	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Hon. Daniel Andrews - Victorian Premier. • The Hon. James Merlino - Victorian Deputy Premier. • The Hon. Tim Pallas – Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Industrial Relations • The Hon. Jaala Pulford - Victorian Minister for Resources • The Hon. Richard Wynne - Victorian Minister for Planning. • The Hon. Lilians (Lily) D'Ambrosio - Victorian Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change • The Hon. Jacinta Allan - Victorian Minister for Transport Infrastructure. • The Hon. Melissa Horne - Victorian Minister for Ports and Freight • The Hon. Melissa Price – Australian Minister for the Environment. • The Hon. Lisa Neville - Victorian Minister for Water. • The Hon. Mary-Anne Thomas – Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional Development. • The Hon. Gabrielle Williams – Minister for Aboriginal Affairs • The Hon. Peter Walsh – Murray Plains. • The Hon. Martin Foley, Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services • Senator the Hon. Bridget McKenzie, Senator for Victoria, Minister for Regional Services, Local Government and Decentralisation.
Local Government	<p>Gannawarra Shire Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Tom O'Reilly (Chief Executive Officer). • Mr Geoff Rollinson (Director of Infrastructure and Development). • Mr Phil Higgins (Director Corporate Services). • Ms Stacy Williams – Director Community Wellbeing • Local government officers. <p>Councillors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Charlie Gillingham (Mayor) – Avoca Ward. • Mr Ross Stanton – Murray Ward. • Mr Kelvin Burt – Patchell Ward. • Mr Travis Collier – Patchell Ward. • Ms Jane Ogden (Deputy Mayor) – Patchell Ward. • Mr Keith Link – Yarran Ward. • Mr Garner Smith - Yarran Ward. <p>Swan Hill Rural City – Consultation with Swan Hill Rural City Council will be required where cross municipality issues may arise.</p>
Water, power and telecommunications	<p>Water authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water. • Goulburn Murray Water. • Lower Murray Water. <p>Power:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citipower. • Powercor. <p>Telecommunication providers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optus. • Telstra.
Road authorities, transport providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VicRoads. • Gannawarra Shire Council. • Swan Hill Rural City.



Stakeholder Group	Stakeholders (Key members/organisations)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V/Line. • Swan Hill Bus Lines • Central Murray Transport Group • VicTrack.
Emergency services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CFA - Kerang Fire Brigade, Quambatook Fire Brigade. • Police - Kerang Police Station, Quambatook Police Station. • SES - Kerang State Emergency Service. • Ambulance - Kerang Ambulance Service.
Health facilities (Hospitals)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northern District Community Health. • Swan Hill District Health. • Kerang District Health. • Sea Lake & District Hospital. • Cohuna Hospital. • East Wimmera Health Service.
Community Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religious groups. • Sporting groups - Kerang Badminton Association Inc, Kerang Amateur Basketball Association, Wandella Cricket Club, Kerang Golf Bowling Club, Kerang Golf Bowling Club Ladies, Quambatook Bowling Club, Loddon Murray Cycling, Central Murray Football & Netball League, Kerang Clay Target Club Inc etc. • Agricultural Groups - Kerang & District Agricultural Society, Kerang Agricultural Society Ladies Committee, Kerang Cropping Group. • Aviation Groups - Mid Murray Flying Club. • Fishing Groups – Mystic Park Fishing Club. • Environmental groups – Lalbert Landcare Group. • Other community groups: Kerang Branch Country Women's Association (CWA), Koondrook Sub Branch RSL, Family & Friends of Glenarm Group, Loddon Mallee Waste and Resource Recovery Group, Lalbert Recreation Reserve Committee, Central Murray Road Safe Group (CMRSG), Treasures Walking Group Swan Hill. Kerang Jolly Walkers). • Local business, trade and progress groups – The Mallee Regional Partnership, Kerang Progress Association, Woorinen & District Progress Association, Cohuna & District Progress Association, Lake Boga Inc, Swan Hill Inc. • Agricultural groups – Swan Hill District Agricultural & Pastoral Society, Kerang & District Agricultural Society.
Training providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kerang Learning Centre. • Sunraysia Institute of TAFE, • Murray Mallee Local Learning, Employment Network. • Murray Mallee Training Company Ltd, E-Works. • Madec Jobs Australia • Swan Hill College • Kerang Technical High School.
Local tourist authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit Kerang, Cohuna and Koondrook Region (Gannawarra Shire Council).
Local Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ABC Mildura. • Local newspapers – The Guardian, Swan Hill Guardian, Hay Riverine Grazier, Kerang Gannawarra Times, Koondrook Barham Bridge.



Note: This is a preliminary list of stakeholders which will be expanded on further as the engagement process continues



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