

Wimmera Mineral Sands Project EES: Scoping Requirements process

Wimmera Mineral Sands Project EES – Final Scoping Requirements FAQs

May 2020

What is the purpose of the scoping requirements?

Iluka Resources Ltd is preparing an environment effects statement (EES) for the Wimmera Mineral Sands Project, and the EES scoping requirements set out the matters that need to be investigated and documents within the EES.

Final EES scoping requirements have been approved by the Minister for Planning and are available on the DELWP website: <https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/environment-assessment/browse-projects/projects/wimmera-mineral-sands>

Why is an Environment Effects Statement (EES) required for the Iluka Mineral Sands Project?

An EES is the most comprehensive and robust assessment process available and will provide for an integrated and transparent examination of the proposed project and its effects, which is necessary because of the array of potential effects, the substantial public interest and the different statutory approvals typically required for this type of major project.

The Minister for Planning determined under the *Environment Effects Act 1978* that Iluka should prepare an EES for the Wimmera Mineral Sands Project in August 2019. In the procedures and requirements, the Minister identified key environmental risks that would need to be addressed in the EES, namely:

- effects on biodiversity and ecological values within and near the site, as associated with adjacent road reserves, including native vegetation, listed threatened communities and species of flora and fauna; and other habitat values;
- effects on surface water environments, including local waterways and the broader catchment, as well as groundwater resources (hydrology, quality, uses and dependent ecosystems);
- effects on cultural heritage values;
- effects on land stability, erosion and soil productivity associated with the construction and operation of the project, including progressive rehabilitation works;
- effects on the land uses and landscape values of the site and surrounding areas;
- effects of project construction and operation on air quality and noise on nearby sensitive receptors;
- 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; and
- solid and liquid waste generated by the project during construction and operation.

The EES documentation will need to include detailed description of the proposed project and rigorous assessment of its potential effects on the environment and approaches to mitigation. The EES will inform the public and stakeholders, and seek feedback. Ultimately it enables the Minister to issue an assessment of the environmental effects of the project at the end of the process. The Minister's assessment will inform statutory decision-makers responsible for the project's approvals.

The project was also referred to the Commonwealth under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). A delegate for the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment determined on 16 September 2019 that the project is a controlled action and hence requires assessment and approval under the EPBC Act. The provisions for the Australian Government's controlled action decision under the EPBC Act are:

- listed threatened species and communities (sections 18 and 18a);
- listed migratory species (sections 20 and 20a); and
- protection of the environment from nuclear actions (sections 21 and 22A).

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What studies are Iluka doing to further identify any associated risks with the project?

In preparing the EES, Iluka are undertaking a range of technical investigations to assess the potential impacts of the project. These investigations include biodiversity, groundwater and surface water, noise, vibration, heritage, radiation, socioeconomic conditions, land use, traffic and transport, air quality and soils.

These studies will inform strategies to avoid, minimise or mitigate potential impacts which will form an important part of the EES documentation.

What are the final Scoping Requirements?

The set of matters to be investigated and documented in each EES are tailored to the project and its environmental risks. The draft scoping requirements for a project are prepared by the department on behalf of the Minister and then exhibited for 15 business days for comment by interested parties. The draft scoping requirements for the EES were informed by the proponent's referral and draft EES study program, as well as advice from agencies represented on the Technical Reference Group (TRG) and advice from the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment.

The scoping requirements for the Iluka EES represent a broad scope of issues that must be addressed by Iluka in the EES. Assessment of effects as required by the scoping requirements must include discussion of all potential direct, indirect, on-site and off-site effects as result of the proposed project. Consistent with the Minister's decision for requiring an EES, the final scoping requirements cover a range of matters that need investigation, including impacts on biodiversity values, water (catchment and hydrology) values, amenity values such as air quality, noise and social amenity in general, social and land use values including agriculture, as well as landscape and visual values and cultural heritage.

The broad nature of the final scoping requirements will ensure that the specific concerns raised through submissions are addressed in the EES. However, some minor refinements and editorial changes have been made to the scoping requirements to strengthen the clarity of issues and better reflect the local context, these changes included:

- Natimuk Lake was added as a specific water body to consider when characterising existing groundwater and surface water environments.
- The potential for impacts on the hydrology and/or water quality of Natimuk Lake (as well as other nearby water bodies) were included as matters to be investigated.
- Lighting was added as an aspect to be considered in characterising the existing conditions and for identifying potentially sensitive receptors that may be affected by the project.
- Potential effects on accessibility for farmland and community infrastructure, as well as local residences, was added as aspects to be assessed in the EES.

Was there public consultation for the draft scoping requirements?

An integral part of the EES process is the proponent engaging the public and stakeholders to identify and respond to their issues in conjunction with their EES studies.

Iluka has already commenced consultation with stakeholders and the community on the EES. Iluka is also preparing a consultation plan for the EES, outlining the opportunities and approaches for its community engagement during the preparation of the EES. The plan will be refined following advice from DELWP and the Technical Reference Group and when completed will be published on the DELWP website.

Under its EES consultation plan the proponent needs to inform the public and stakeholders about the EES process and its associated investigations, ensuring it provides opportunities for input and engagement on these investigations.

Draft scoping requirements for the EES were exhibited for a period of 15 business days and closed 31 March 2020. Notice of the draft scoping requirements' exhibition was publicised on the DELWP website and via advertisements in major newspapers.

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Two submissions were received on the draft scoping requirements. Submissions were received from members of the local community and environmental groups.

Most of the issues raised in submissions received were environmental effects that the Minister identified in the decision to require an EES and were already included in the draft scoping requirements and therefore the final scoping requirements. Submitters provided a valuable local perspective on the local community values and sensitivities of particular concern.

All submissions have been provided to the proponent and the technical reference group to inform the ongoing development of the EES.

The key environmental issues raised in the submissions relevant to the EES scope related to:

- Impacts on accessibility due to closure or diversion of local roads by the project;
- Impacts on noise and lighting from the mine and project-related traffic;
- Concerns regarding the safety and suitability of the Horsham-Noradjuha Rd for mine traffic;
- Impacts on property values and local amenity for residents;
- Potential for the project to result in contamination of the downstream Natimuk Lake, as well flooding the township of Natimuk; and
- Restriction of drainage from the mine site potentially resulting in reduced flows to Natimuk Lake.

What happens now the Minister has issued the final scoping requirements?

The proponent will proceed with the necessary information-gathering and investigations to inform the EES. This is expected to take at least several months. It will conduct its studies and prepare the EES in close consultation with DELWP and a technical reference group consisting of lead statutory agencies and the relevant local council.

The proponent will also need to implement its EES consultation plan to engage the public and stakeholders about the EES process and its associated investigations, ensuring it provides opportunities for input and feedback on these investigations. The consultation plan is reviewed and amended in consultation with DELWP and the TRG prior to being published on the DELWP website.

When the EES is ready, it will be reviewed by DELWP, and the Minister for Planning will decide whether to authorise the EES to be exhibited. If authorised, the EES will be advertised for public comment for a period of 30 business days. There will be further opportunities for public comment on the project's environmental effects when the EES is exhibited.

The EES and the submissions received, together with the draft planning scheme amendment, will be referred to an inquiry to be appointed under the *Environment Effects Act 1978*.

An inquiry will consider all the information before it, having undertaken a formal hearing process and will report to the Minister, who will then make an assessment and provide it to decision-makers (including Earth Resources Regulation and the Commonwealth with regard to the required approval under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*).

After the Minister has made an assessment, the report of the inquiry and the Minister's assessment will be published on the DELWP website.

When does Iluka expect to have an environmental effects statement released?

The EES is expected to be released in 2021 (timing to be confirmed), when it goes on public exhibition for public comment. During this period Iluka will undertake planned engagement activities.

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What is the Iluka Mineral Sands Project?

The proposed project is located approximately 40km southwest of Horsham, with an approximate mining footprint of 2,600ha. Iluka is proposing to extract approximately 10Mt of ore per annum, which will be refined onsite to produce 192kt/a of recoverable mineral product (zircon, titanium oxide and rare earth products), over the projected 25-year mine life.

The project will include the development of a mineral sands mine, mineral separation plant, zircon and rare earth refineries, ore receipt and liquification system, water pipelines, pit dewatering infrastructure, mine by-products and containment infrastructure, electricity supply infrastructure, additional onsite infrastructure (e.g. administration buildings, roads, fuel storage and laydown areas) and offsite infrastructure (e.g. access road construction/upgrades, water pipelines and temporary construction village). The proposed mining method has not been finalised. However, it is likely to be progressively mined using mobile earthmoving equipment.