

**For Public Notice via Internet****REASONS FOR DECISION UNDER *ENVIRONMENT EFFECTS ACT 1978*****Title of Proposal:** Goschen Mineral Sands Project**Proponent:** VHM Exploration Limited Pty Ltd**Description of Project:**

The proposed Goschen project has an approximate area of area of 8,300 hectares and is located approximately 20 kilometres south of Swan Hill, in the Murray Mallee bioregion of Victoria. The Goschen deposit contains approximately 300 million tonnes (Mt) of ore and is proposed to produce a zircon and rutile concentrate, titanium concentrate and a rare earth concentrate.

The proposal includes the development of a mineral sands mine, mining unit plant, wet concentrator plant, interim tailings storage facility (TSF), solar drying beds for tailings, slurry pipelines to transfer ore from pits to the processing facilities and additional site infrastructure (i.e. site office, warehouse and workshop facilities, loading facilities and fuel storage). Proposed mining methods involve open pit mining to extract approximately 5 million tonnes of ore per annum, increasing to 10 Mtpa over a projected mine life of 30 years. Mine products are proposed to be transported via road or by rail for export overseas.

It is anticipated that between 3 Gigalitres (GL) to 5.5 GL per annum will be required for the first few years of mining and will be reduced once tailings water is available for reuse.

**Decision:**

The Minister for Planning has decided that an Environment Effects Statement (EES) is required for the proposed Goschen Mineral Sand Project, as described in the referral accepted on 7 September 2018.

**Reasons for Decision:**

- The project has the potential for a range of significant environmental effects. In particular the project as proposed is likely to have significant effects on:
  - a very large extent of native vegetation and associated biodiversity values, including listed threatened species and communities;
  - surface water and groundwater (i.e. hydrology, quality, availability) and protected beneficial uses;
  - existing land uses, amenity (i.e. air quality, noise and traffic) and landscape values of the project area and those associated with the broader area; and
  - Aboriginal cultural heritage values.
- An integrated assessment is necessary to ensure the range of likely adverse effects and related uncertainties are sufficiently investigated, in terms of both their extent and significance, and how significant effects can be avoided and minimised to acceptable levels.
- An EES would enable a transparent and rigorous process for consideration of potentially significant adverse effects of the project, prior to any relevant statutory decision-making, including under the *Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990*, *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* and *Water Act 1989*.

**Date of Decision: 10 October 2018**