

For Public Notice via Internet

REASONS FOR DECISION UNDER *ENVIRONMENT EFFECTS ACT 1978*

Title of Proposal: Goldfields Superpipe (Bendigo to Ballarat)

Proponent: Central Highlands Water

Description of Project: The Goldfields Superpipe (Ballarat) project involves the construction and operation of approximately 87 km of buried 750 mm water pipeline, three associated pump stations and one header tank in the Victorian Midlands region between Sandhurst Reservoir, Bendigo and White Swan Reservoir, Ballarat. The pipeline will be primarily located in an existing powerline easement in a rural landscape comprising cleared land, agricultural land, regrowth and remnant vegetation. It crosses Greater Bendigo National Park and Wombat State Forest.

Decision:

The Minister for Planning has decided that an environment effects statement is not required for this project, subject to the following conditions:

- That Central Highlands Water, prior to implementing the project, or alternately a stage of the project, prepare an Environmental Management Plan (EMP) to the satisfaction of the Secretary of the Department of Sustainability and Environment.
- The EMP is to provide a framework for managing environmental effects and risks of the project, including:
 - a. environmental indicators and objectives to guide management actions and monitor environmental performance;
 - b. description of planned and contingency measures for project construction and operation, including control, mitigation, emergency response, rehabilitation and offset measures, to minimise the potential for adverse effects and achieve the environmental objectives;
 - c. a program for environmental monitoring and reporting to assess the project's performance against the environmental objectives;
 - d. consultation with stakeholders during the implementation of the project;
 - e. governance arrangements for monitoring and control of the environmental performance of the project, including independent auditing.
- Prior to the removal of any native vegetation, a native vegetation offset plan consistent with *Victoria's Native Vegetation Management – A Framework for Action (2002)*, be prepared to the satisfaction of the Minister for Environment.

Reasons for Decision:

- Environmental investigations on the project undertaken on behalf of Central Highlands Water provide an adequate basis to assess environmental risks. While some further investigations on matters including soil stability and fauna are needed, these can be concluded as part of finalising an environmental management plan for the project;
- The proposed pipeline route utilises an existing, disturbed powerline easement for much of its length, and additional permanent clearance of native vegetation is largely restricted to removal of trees and tall shrubs along a 3 metre strip along part of the length of the pipeline construction easement. Affected understorey vegetation will be able to recover.
- Suitable opportunities are available to off-set proposed clearing of native vegetation, in accordance with the Native Vegetation Management Framework.
- While some areas of habitat of threatened species, including the Swift Parrot, Powerful and Barking Owls, Growling Grass Frog, Pink-tailed Worm-lizard, Striped Legless Lizard and Tuan, would be affected, expected habitat recovery together with implementation of mitigation measures will avoid significant impacts on populations of these species.
- There would be limited permanent effects on landscape and only temporary effects on recreation activities in the Greater Bendigo National Park and Wombat State Forest as well as on other existing land uses.
- The pipeline is unlikely to significantly affect areas of high archaeological importance.
- Suitable techniques are available to avoid significant adverse effects on waterways from construction of proposed crossings.
- Overall, the project is unlikely to give rise to significant adverse environmental effects, having regard to available mitigation measures and the opportunity to implement the project in accordance with a rigorous environmental management plan.

Date of Decision: 20 June 2007