

For Public Notice via Internet

REASONS FOR DECISION UNDER *ENVIRONMENT EFFECTS ACT 1978*

Title of Proposal: Melbourne-Sydney Standard Gauge Passing Lanes 1A- 4

Proponent: South Improvement Alliance

Description of Project:

The South Improvement Alliance (SIA) proposes to construct four 7 km long passing lanes and one 2.1 km passing lane on the standard gauge rail line between North Sunshine and Tallarook (being part of the upgrade of the rail line between Melbourne and Junee in southwest NSW). The project aims to reduce the transit time and increase the freight capacity and reliability of the Melbourne to Sydney link in the national standard gauge rail network.

Construction of the passing lanes will be undertaken within the existing rail reserve and works will extend to the eastern side of the rail reserve. The passing lane components will consist of standard rails, ballast and sleepers with turnouts at the ends of the lane to allow freight trains to manoeuvre back to the main rail track. The approximate impact area will be 10m from the outer eastern edge of the existing track (including a 6m fire break).

Decision:

The Minister for Planning has decided that an Environment Effects Statement is not required for the proposed Melbourne-Sydney Standard Gauge Passing Lanes 1A- 4 as described in the referral accepted on 26 June 2007, subject to the following condition:

- That the South Improvement Alliance, prior to implementing the project, or alternately a stage of the project, prepare an Environmental Management Plan (EMP) to the satisfaction of the relevant Regional Director of the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

Reasons for Decision:

- Environmental investigations undertaken to date have been comprehensive, and provide an adequate basis upon which to assess potential environmental effects;
- Passing Lanes 1A to 4 are to be constructed within an existing railway reservation which consists of a largely modified environment with limited patches of remnant native vegetation;
- Appropriate offsets are available to provide a 'net gain' response to proposed clearing of native vegetation, in accordance with Victoria's Native Vegetation Management: A Framework for Action;
- Passing Lanes 1A to 4 are unlikely to significantly affect listed flora and fauna species or areas of high archaeological or cultural heritage significance;
- The potential environmental impacts can be effectively managed through Construction Environmental Management Plans for each Passing Lane.

Date of Decision: 14 August 2007