**For Public Notice via Internet**

**REASONS FOR DECISION UNDER *ENVIRONMENT EFFECTS ACT 1978***

**Title of Proposal: South West Loddon Water Supply Project Stage 2**

**Proponent: Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water Corporation**

**Description of Project:**

The Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water Corporation propose to construct a pipeline network to provide a secure rural stock water, and domestic water supply to up to 630 landholders in the drought-affected South West Loddon region.

The project objective is to provide a secure, piped water supply to reduce the reliance on farm dams and supplementary water carting during periods of drought, increasing the region’s water security and supporting the farming and livestock industries. The proposed pipeline network covers an area of 2,900 km2 (project extent), and consists of a trunk line (360 km), distribution lines (1000 km), nine pump stations (20 m x 30 m) and a balancing storage (300 m x 300 m).

The proponent intends to avoid and minimize impacts by selecting ‘low-risk’ sites for siting of infrastructure, where there are no known values present; re-aligning the pipeline around sensitive areas and values; utilizing trenchless technology to lay the pipeline underneath sensitive areas (horizontal directional drilling with entry and exit points in paddocks); and by minimizing direct impacts in other sensitive areas by selecting a trenching method with a narrower impact corridor.

**Decision:**

The Minister for Planning has decided that an Environment Effects Statement (EES) is not required, subject to the following conditions, for the South West Loddon Pipeline Project, as described in the referral accepted on 6 April 2017.

1. The proponent must prepare a Project Design and Impact Assessment Report (PDIA Report) for the referred project, to the satisfaction of the Minister for Planning, which describes and documents:
   1. the proposed design, alignment locations and site selection of the trunk pipelines, distribution pipelines and associated infrastructure (including the pump stations, firefighting infrastructure and emergency access points);
   2. the predicted environmental impacts of the proposed design and alignments, in particular on native vegetation, biodiversity values (such any listed threatened species and communities), waterway values, Aboriginal cultural heritage values, historic cultural heritage values and current land-uses;
   3. mapping that clarifies the locations of proposed infrastructure, predicted environmental impacts and key environmental assets and values to be avoided (no go zones);
   4. investigations and surveys undertaken by suitably qualified persons to inform the prediction of potential environmental impacts of the project;
   5. the proposed measures/methods for avoidance and mitigation of the potential impacts on key environmental assets and values identified, including Crown land;
   6. the proposed framework for environmental management and governance of the project, that is to help ensure appropriate avoidance, minimisation and regulation of predicted environmental impacts and management of residual uncertainties during construction and operational phases;
   7. the proposed approach to delivery and staging of the project’s construction; and
   8. a risk assessment of waterway crossings, to inform decisions on the proposed crossing methods and environmental management to be implemented to avoid and minimise environmental impacts.
2. The PDIA Report is to be prepared in consultation with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and other relevant agencies, including Parks Victoria, Aboriginal Victoria, the Loddon Shire Council, Northern Grampians Shire Council North Central Catchment Management Authority, to enable timely review and advice on the alignment, site selection, and design with respect to the avoidance and minimisation of environmental impacts.
3. Prior to the commencement of any works a project Environmental Management Framework must be completed by the proponent, in consultation with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, and then submitted to and approved by the Minister for Planning. The framework must include a statement of all environmental commitments for the project, including specific measures to address predicted impacts and risks. Moreover, the framework must address:
   1. the purpose, scope and description of the project and its delivery, including the number of project stages to be adopted for its construction;
   2. the legislative requirements for the project;
   3. a description of the environmental documents required for the project and the review, approval, and change process for each of them;
   4. the proponent’s environmental policy and overview of environmental management system;
   5. environmental performance standards for the construction and operation of the project;
   6. the environmental risk assessment for the project demonstrating that the potential impacts and risks documented in the PDIA Report (Condition 1), are directly linked to appropriate mitigation and management measures;
   7. roles and responsibilities during the construction and operation of the project, including a training and awareness program; and
   8. the environmental monitoring, auditing, reporting and notification procedures for the project.
4. Prior the commencement of any works for a stage of the project, a Construction Environmental Management Plan must be prepared for that stage, in consultation with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, the relevant Shire(s) and the North Central Catchment Management Authority, and then submitted to and endorsed by the Secretary of the department administering the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987*.
5. Prior to the commencement of any works, a Threatened Species Management Plan must be prepared for the project, in consultation with the Department of Environment, Land Water and Planning, and then submitted to and endorsed by the Secretary of the department administering the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987*. The plan must include specific measures intended to address predicted impacts and risks on listed threatened species, in particular the Golden Sun Moth, Growling Grass Frog and Bibron’s Toadlet.
6. Prior to the removal of any native vegetation, a Native Vegetation Offset Strategy must be prepared to address predicted losses and detail how offsets will be secured for the project and then must be submitted to and approved by the Secretary of the department administering the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987*.
7. Prior to the removal of any native vegetation for each stage of the project, a Native Vegetation Offset Plan for that stage must be prepared and then submitted to and approved by the Secretary of the department administering the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987*. The plan must outline the offsets for that stage of the project and demonstrate that the offsets have been secured to the satisfaction of the Secretary of the department administering the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987*.

**Reasons for Decision:**

* There are a number of potential adverse effects and related uncertainties in relation to significant environmental values across the project extent, in particular for biodiversity and cultural heritage values.
* While the proponent has developed a high-level strategy to avoid and minimise impacts through design, site selection and construction methods, at this stage there is not sufficient information on the design and environmental values to establish the feasibility and likely effectiveness of the strategy.
* Given the project extent includes many Aboriginal heritage places, Heritage Inventory Sites and Register Places, conservation reserves and parks, watercourses, threatened flora and fauna, and threatened ecological communities of National and State significance, the potential for significant impact to these values needs to be assessed. This should occur when the design and survey work has been completed and the details of the avoidance and mitigation strategy are well understood.
* The conditions set out through this decision provide the most appropriate means for assessing, managing and approving the residual impacts, cognisant of the proposed approach to the delivery of the project.

**Date of Decision: 10 May 2017**