**For Public Notice via Internet**

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

**Title of Proposal: Esso Pipeline Replacement Project**

**Proponent:** Esso Australia Resources Pty Ltd (Esso)

**Description of Project:**

Esso proposes to replace its existing Longford 700 millimetre gas pipeline with a new, 350 millimetres in diameter and approximately 187 kilometres (km) in length, pipeline to continue transport of crude oil and condensate between Gippsland and Hastings in Victoria. The proposed pipeline will commence at the Longford Gas Plant site, located about 15km south-east of Sale in Gippsland, and travel west to Long Island Point near Hastings, approximately 60km south-east of Melbourne.

Majority of the replacement pipeline will be constructed adjacent to the existing pipeline, within Esso’s easements, which traverses through private freehold land, Crown land (unreserved and reserved, including Holey Plains State Park). Some sections of the pipeline, at a few locations could be constructed outside the existing easement.

Key construction activities would include: clearing and grading of a construction ‘right of way’; establishing access tracks to construction sites; trenching, pipe stringing, bending, welding, coating and laying; trench backfilling; up to 8 new valve sites; new electrical cables to valve sites and site huts; as well as site rehabilitation activities. The expected implementation timeframe for construction is between late 2014 and the end of 2016.

**Decision:**

The Minister for Planning has decided that an Environment Effects Statement (EES) is not required for the Esso Pipeline Replacement Project, as described in the referral accepted on 25 March 2014, subject to the following conditions:

1. The proponent is to prepare a report that assesses the likely environmental effects of the project on terrestrial and aquatic ecology, in particular:
   1. further assesses the potential effects of the project on key biodiversity assets and values
   2. identifies the proposed measures for avoidance and mitigation of the potential effects on key biodiversity assets and values and map those to be avoided
   3. includes a risk assessment for waterway crossings that informs decisions on the proposed crossing method and environmental management to be implemented to minimise the potential effects
   4. specifies the measures and performance requirements proposed to be implemented to manage the potential environmental effects of the projects.
2. The report under condition (a) is to be:
   1. prepared in consultation with the Department of Environment and Primary Industries and the Department of State Development, Business and Innovation; and West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority and Melbourne Water for waterway crossings
   2. completed to the satisfaction of the Secretary of the Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure or delegate
   3. submitted to the Minister for Energy and Resources to inform the decision on the Pipeline Licence under the *Pipelines Act 2005*.

**Reasons for Decision:**

The Minister for Planning has not required an EES, subject to the above conditions, because:

* The project’s potential for significant effects are likely to be limited to the construction works within the proposed construction corridor adjacent to the existing pipeline easements. Other works will be confined to the easements, which have been previously disturbed during the construction and operation of the existing pipeline infrastructure.
* The project has the potential for significant effects on biodiversity values, including on flora and fauna species and communities listed under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*, water environments and Aboriginal cultural heritage, largely within the proposed construction corridor. However, there are no practical alternatives for the proposed pipeline alignment warranting further investigation, as the pipeline would be primarily installed within existing easements.
* Potentially significant effects on Aboriginal cultural heritage values can be addressed through the statutory requirements under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*.
* Further assessment and documentation of the effects on biodiversity values and water environments, as well evaluation of the appropriate avoidance and management measures by the proponent is needed, to inform relevant statutory decisions, in particular under the *Pipelines Act 2005*. This can be achieved through the applied conditions and does not require an Environment Effects Statement.
* Other residual effects of the project should be readily addressed through the management and offsetting measures documented in the Construction Environmental Management Plan required under the *Pipelines Act 2005*.

**Date of Decision:** 7 May 2014