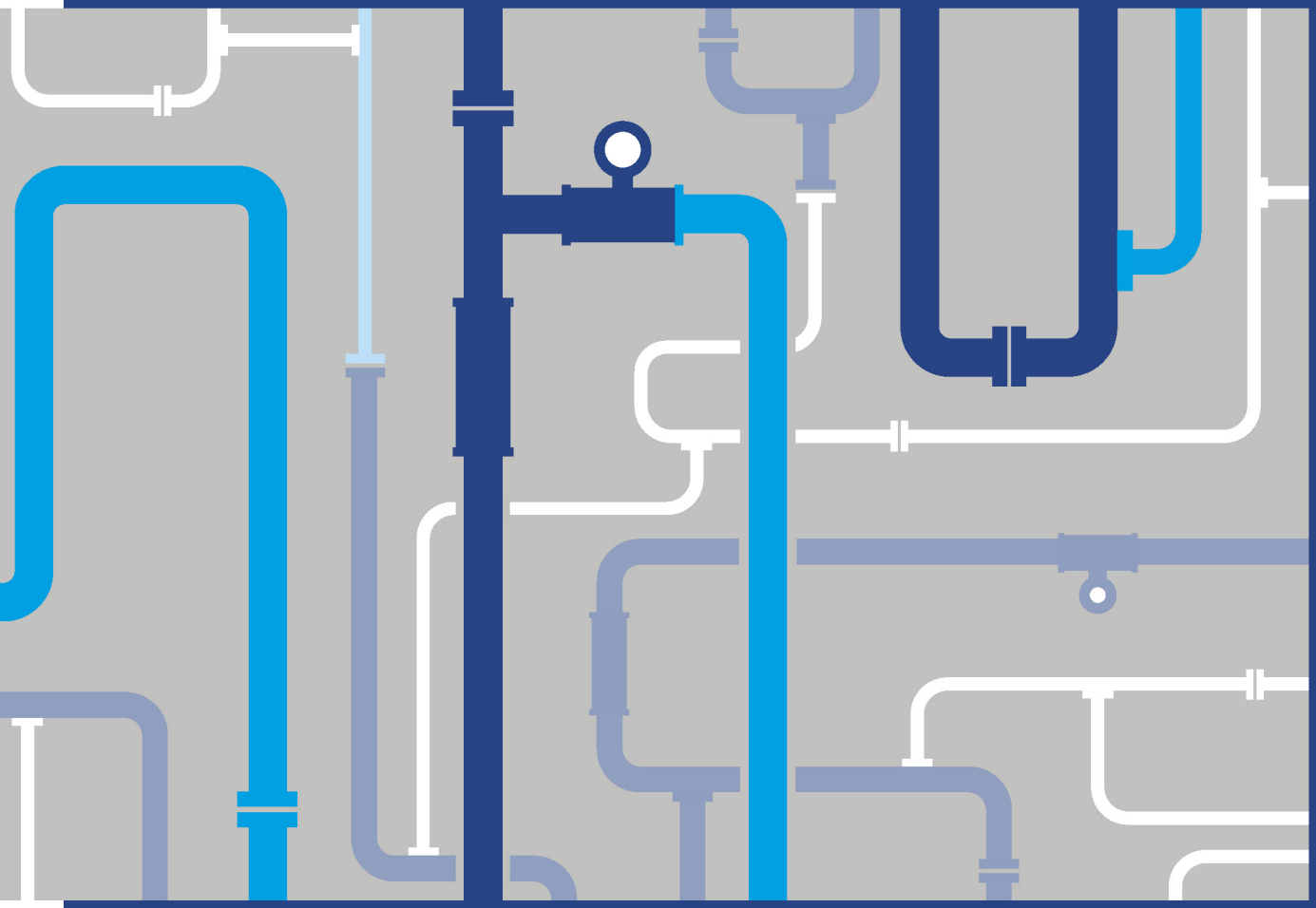
chapter 20

conclusion.



Environment Effects Statement | May 2021

western outer ring main

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20.1 Overview

This chapter concludes the Environment Effects Statement (EES) for the Western Outer Ring Main (WORM) gas pipeline project (the Project).

The Project would provide critical infrastructure for Victoria's gas supply, transmission and consequent security, efficiency and affordability. Key benefits would include:

- Improving Victoria's gas network capacity and performance
- Reducing the risk of unplanned outages
- Increasing capacity within the Victorian Transmission System (VTS)
- More efficient operation and management of the VTS by allowing gas to flow interchangeably from the eastern and western parts of the gas network without the need for direct operator intervention
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the network.

The Project objectives are:

- Improved system resilience and security of gas supply
- Increasing the amount of natural gas that can be stored for times of peak demand
- Improved network performance and reliability
- Addressing potential gas shortages as forecast by AEMO in the March 2021 Victorian Gas Planning Report

Project construction would also bring regional economic benefits through employment and purchasing of goods and services.

This EES presents an integrated assessment of the Project, to allow stakeholders and decision-makers to understand how the Project works are to be designed, constructed and operated and the likely environmental effects. It considers the construction methodology, operation and potential environmental impacts of the works as well as the cumulative impacts of the Project combined with other major projects in the vicinity.

Through the EES process, APA has:

- Addressed the EES scoping requirements issued by the Minister for Planning
- Undertaken an integrated assessment of the potential environmental effects of the Project through the preparation of 13 technical reports
- Evaluated the Project's risks, potential impacts and proposed measures to avoid, minimise or offset these predicted impacts
- Assessed the likely residual effects following the adoption of mitigation measures
- Developed an Environmental Management Framework (EMF) to outline a transparent framework with clear accountabilities for managing and monitoring environmental effects and hazards associated with construction and operation of the Project to achieve acceptable environmental outcomes
- Involved and informed the public and stakeholders about the Project, its potential environmental, social and economic impacts and how these impacts would be avoided, minimised or managed.

For the purpose of the EPBC Act, the Victorian EES will serve as the accredited assessment process under a Bilateral Assessment Agreement between the Commonwealth and Victorian governments.

20.2 Assessment conclusions against the evaluation objectives

The Project has been assessed against the evaluation objectives set out in the EES scoping requirements (Table 20-1). A summary of the assessment of the Project against the evaluation objectives is provided in the following sections.

Table 20-1 Evaluation objectives

Evaluation Objectives established by Minister's Scoping Requirements
Energy efficiency, security, affordability and safety – To provide for safe and cost-effective pipeline connection between the eastern and western sections of the Victorian Transmission System.
Biodiversity and habitats – To avoid and minimise potential adverse effects on native vegetation, listed threatened and migratory species and ecological communities, and habitat for these species, as well as restore and offset residual environmental effects consistent with state and Commonwealth policies.
Water and catchment values – To maintain the functions and values of groundwater, surface water and floodplain environments and minimise effects on water quality and beneficial uses.
Cultural heritage – To avoid, or minimise where avoidance is not possible, adverse effects on Aboriginal and historic cultural heritage values.
Social, economic, amenity and land use – To minimise potential adverse social, economic, amenity and land use effects at local and regional scales.
Waste management – To minimise generation of wastes from the project during construction and operation, and to prevent adverse environmental or health effects from storing, handling, transporting and disposing of waste products.

20.2.1 Energy efficiency, security, affordability and safety

Evaluation objective: To provide for safe and cost-effective pipeline connection between the eastern and western sections of the Victorian Transmission System.

This objective was considered by Technical report M *Safety*, which identified and assessed existing conditions, risks to safety and appropriate mitigation measures for the Project, and Technical report H *Greenhouse gas* which identified and assessed energy use and greenhouse gas emissions for the Project.

Chapter 2 *Project Rationale* outlines the energy efficiency, security and affordability benefits of this connection between the eastern and western sections of the VTS. The Project responds to the forecast changes in supply source locations and would directly support the timely transfer of higher volumes of gas from the east to the west of the state. To support the operational efficiency of the new high pressure pipeline once it is connected to the VTS, upgrades to the Wollert Compressor Station are also proposed as part of the Project.

The additional compressor and a regulating station proposed at Wollert would allow for increased volumes of gas (approximately an additional 100 Tj per day) to be compressed and transferred to the Iona Underground Storage basin. This upgrade would require significantly less compression to achieve gas transfer, compared with the current network arrangement, which depends on two or more compressor stations at Brooklyn.

Operation of the Project is predicted by AEMO to lead to efficiency gains in the overall Victorian gas supply network, leading to a net reduction in total greenhouse gas emissions across the VTS. The net reduction in state and national emissions would equate to 10,110 t CO_2-e per annum, which the greenhouse gas assessment found to equate to a reduction of 0.010% and 0.002% of state and national totals respectively.

As part of a Safety Management Study (SMS), potential threats to safety were assessed taking into account a location analysis. The location analysis classified land use based on population density and existing and reasonably foreseeable land uses. This informed the risk assessment and proposed engineering and procedure control measures. Approximately 40 percent of the Project is inside the Urban Growth Boundary, with the primary location classification being Residential. The remaining 60 percent of the Project is located outside of the Urban Growth Boundary on land primarily used for grazing and cropping, which has a location classification of Rural, with some Rural-residential or Residential.

All safety hazards were assessed as having a residual risk rating of low or below. The mitigation controls planned to be implemented by APA were identified and additional mitigation recommendations have been introduced to further reduce risks so far as is reasonably practicable. Additional risk mitigation measures would continue to be identified by APA and implemented to continue reducing risks to so far as is reasonably practicable.

The key safety risk identified in the construction phase is from fire, starting either within or outside the construction corridor. Other risks include human factor errors taking place in the management of blasting activities resulting in impacts on workers or the general public; the likelihood of this is rare and therefore the residual risk is low.

The residual risks during construction would be controlled using emergency response plans that are developed by the construction contractor with specific controls for risks such as bushfires, and other low likelihood construction related risks associated with the management of hazardous materials, blasting and vehicle movement. A blast management plan would be developed and provide a detailed approach to blasting including impact and exclusion zones based on the contractor's methodology.

The key credible threats in the operation phase relate to external impact, natural events and geohazards, intentional damage and external impact from operation of machinery. Bushfire is also a risk in the operation phase.

As a result of design requirements in AS/NZS 2885.1 (for example, wall thickness and depth of cover) and engineering controls such as the layout and design of the infrastructure in compliance with the relevant codes, technical standards, and industry best practice, the risks of gas release and/or ignition through rupture is not considered a credible failure.

Residual bushfire risks would be managed by APA's emergency response procedures and Bushfire Management Action Plan.

Mitigation measures would be applied through design and Project management measures, to reduce potential safety hazards during Project construction and operation to people, property and the environment so far as is reasonably practicable. The Project would be compliant with the energy release rate limits within AS/NZS 2885.1.

20.2.2 Biodiversity and habitats

Evaluation objective: To avoid and minimise potential adverse effects on native vegetation, listed threatened and migratory species and ecological communities, and habitat for these species, as well as restore and offset residual environmental effects consistent with state and Commonwealth policies.

This objective was considered and assessed by:

- Technical report A *Biodiversity and habitats*. This report includes an assessment of Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES) under Commonwealth policies which is summarised in Chapter 19 *MNES*
- Technical report G *Air quality*. This report considers potential impacts of dust on biodiversity and habitats
- Technical report F *Noise and vibration.* This report provides inputs for consideration of noise or vibration impacts on biodiversity and habitats.

The desktop assessment and field investigation program found that the quality of native vegetation, terrestrial fauna and aquatic values within the construction corridor is generally poor due to the long history of agricultural and urban land use in the surrounding landscape, which has led to disturbance. Some impacts on biodiversity values have been avoided as a result of pipeline re-alignment and construction techniques. Nonetheless, construction and operation of the Project will impact some biodiversity values present within the construction corridor, while some impacts on biodiversity values have been avoided as a result of pipeline re-alignment and construction techniques.

Flora impacts

Two species of threatened flora (Matted Flax-lily Dianella amoena and 48 Tough Scurf-pea Cullen tenax), ten large River Red Gum trees within a TEC, 2.7 hectares of grassy woodland (EPBC/EVC/FFG), 1.26 hectares of grassland (EPBC/EVC/FFG), 1.24 hectares of known and assumed Striped Legless Lizard habitat (outside of the MSA) and 4.08 hectares of known or assumed Golden Sun Moth habitat (outside of the MSA) will be avoided through pipeline re-alignment and use of horizontal directional drilling (HDD).

With the implementation of mitigation measures, residual impacts on flora during construction include:

- 15.32 hectares of native vegetation in patches from six EVCs; 12 large trees within patches; 16 large scattered trees, and 16 small scattered trees
- 4.16 hectares of EPBC Act-listed threatened community Natural Temperate Grassland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain (0.73 hectares inside the approved MSA area and 3.43 hectares outside the MSA area)
- 2.26 hectares of EPBC Act-listed threatened community Grassy Eucalypt Woodland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain (0.06 hectares inside the approved MSA and 2.20 hectares outside the MSA area)
- 10.36 hectares of FFG Act-listed threatened community Western (Basalt) Plains Grasslands Community (1.38 hectares inside the approved MSA area and 8.98 hectares outside the MSA area)
- 4.62 hectares of FFG Act-listed threatened community Western Basalt Plains (River Red Gum) Grassy Woodland (0.32 hectares within the approved MSA area and 4.30 hectares outside the MSA area).

The Project traverses two conservation areas within the MSA, as approved under Part 10 of the EPBC Act. The construction corridor follows the existing Victorian Northern Interconnect Expansion (VNIE) easement within these conservation areas. The extent of the construction corridor within Conservation Area 34a – Northern Growth Corridor and within the existing VNIE easement is 2.39 hectares, with 0.59 hectares outside of the existing easement. The extent of the construction corridor within Conservation Area 28b – Summerhill Road (East) and within the existing easment is 1.78 hectares, and 0.53 hectares outside of the existing easement. Native vegetation is present at the creek crossing of Conservation Area 34a but is not present at Conservation Area 28b. Project realignment has resulted in a minor reduction in the extent of the construction corridor within Conservation Area 34a. A Works in Conservation Area (WICA) approval will be obtained from DELWP prior to works commencing, and will detail the extent of native vegetation and habitat considerations (focusing on the area outside the existing easement and previous disturbance which was covered by a previous approval).

The Project is likely to have a significant impact on the EPBC Act listed Threatened Ecological Community (TEC) Grassy Eucalypt Woodland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain based on five EPBC Act significance criteria, and is also likely to have a significant impact on the EPBC Act listed TEC Natural Temperate Grassland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain based on two criteria. Impacts on the two ecological communities have been reduced as far as possible through the selection of the proposed Project alignment, with further refinement possible. Where impacts could not be avoided, they will be minimised wherever feasible through detailed design, construction management and rehabilitation.

A significant residual impact may still occur for some criteria for the Grassy Eucalypt Woodland community, and the Natural Temperate Grassland community. Residual impacts would be offset in accordance with the requirements of the EPBC Act Environmental Offsets Policy (DSEWPC, 2012) and the Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation (DELWP, 2017). Habitat for the threatened flora species Arching Flax-lily is expected to be removed during construction. However, since the population consists of only a single plant, the population is likely to be unviable in the longer term and the overall impact to the species is considered minor. The Project is not likely to have a significant impact on other EPBC Act listed flora species including Matted Flax-lily. Some of the habitats that would be affected are known to or may support threatened fauna, mainly the higher quality grassland areas and waterways. Given that the majority of the Project is located within areas of non-native vegetation, any accidental damage to native vegetation during construction is likely to be limited to localised impacts.

The Project will impact on State or regionally significant native vegetation, due to direct losses. Impact as a result of direct losses will be minimised by implementation of mitigation measures that will avoid impacts to adjoining native vegetation and trees, manage soil and surface run-off, and will require contractor inductions that include awareness of biodiversity issues. However, since vegetation removal would occur residual impacts remain. Reinstatement is proposed as part of operation, meaning residual impacts are expected to be temporary in nature.

Fauna impacts

A total of 20 bird species listed as migratory under the EPBC Act are known or predicted to occur within the Study Area (as defined in Technical report A *Biodiversity and habitats)*. Some of these may use or visit habitat within the construction corridor occasionally (such as White-throated Needletail, Fork-tailed Swift and Latham's Snipe) but most are unlikely to use habitats within the construction corridor in large numbers or frequently. There is no indication that any location with the construction corridor supports or attracts an ecologically significant proportion of any migratory species, or would be considered important habitat for any migratory species. Based on this and following implementation of standard mitigation measures, residual impacts to migratory species under the EPBC Act due to habitat removal are not expected to occur.

Impacts on threatened fauna are expected to be limited to four species: Golden Sun Moth (EPBC, critically endangered; FFG, Listed; DELWP, vulnerable), Striped Legless Lizard (EPBC, vulnerable; FFG, Listed; DELWP, vulnerable), Growling Grass Frog (EPBC, vulnerable; FFG, Listed; DELWP, vulnerable) and Tussock Skink (DELWP, vulnerable). With a majority of the construction corridor comprising grassland habitats, it is the Golden Sun Moth and Striped Legless Lizard that are expected to experience the greatest impacts of land clearance. The Project is likely to have a significant impact (based on EPBC Act significance criteria) on Golden Sun Moth and Striped Legless Lizard.
The Project is not likely to have a significant impact on other EPBC Act listed fauna species including Growling Grass Frog and Australian Grayling. Residual impacts associated with disturbance of understorey habitat due to land clearing on the Tussock Skink is expected to be temporary with habitats reinstated following works. This would allow the species to recolonise the area following reinstatement from adjacent contiguous areas of habitat that can be used during construction.

While the Project has the potential to have a significant impact on the Golden Sun Moth due to the removal of potential habitat for this species, most habitat loss that is likely to, or that may occur as a result of the Project, is highly localised. This is likely to result in the loss or displacement of individuals rather than populations of this species. Impacts would be reduced by reinstating construction areas once works are complete and revegetating areas with appropriate native grasses that provide habitat and food sources for Golden Sun Moth. A Golden Sun Moth Management Plan would be prepared detailing the location and method for mitigation.

The Striped Legless Lizard is confined to grassy and grassy woodland habitats. Disturbance of these habitats within the construction corridor is expected to be temporary with habitats reinstated following works. Impacts are also expected to be restricted to the narrow construction corridor bisecting areas of habitat, which would allow the species to readily recolonise the area following reinstatement. However, given the species' susceptibility to ground disturbance, it is possible that individuals may not readily return to pre-construction use or any use of the construction corridor. A Striped Legless Lizard Management Plan would be prepared to manage impacts to the species.

Aquatic ecology impacts

Indirect impacts on aquatic ecology values are expected to be minor and temporary during the Project's construction and operation. The majority of aquatic habitats intersected by the pipeline were deemed highly unlikely to support EPBC Act or FFG Act-listed species. While there was a medium likelihood of Australian Grayling being present in Deep Creek, impacts on the species are largely avoided through the use of HDD. Potential residual impacts would be reduced through application of appropriate environmental management measures during the construction phase. The relevant environmental management measures during the construction phase are targeted at limiting impacts by restricting vegetation losses, using suitable erosion and control measures, preventing the delivery of contaminants to waterways and rehabilitating the construction corridor to prevent future erosion and sedimentation impacts.

The recently FFG Act-listed platypus is known to exist in Jacksons Creek and have been observed in close proximity to the Project Area. Although there is a direct risk of injury or death of platypus due to open cut construction, the risk would be minimised or avoided through the scheduling of works to occur between March and May which is outside of the breeding period and implementation of a platypus-specific environmental management measure. A range of environmental management measures have also been developed to manage risks from indirect impacts that may occur due to impacts on water quality and habitat conditions. Implementation of mitigation measure would therefore manage potential residual impacts to platypus.

Other biodiversity impacts

Noxious weeds are ubiquitous throughout the construction corridor and surrounding area. Further spread of weeds/pest animals/pathogens during construction and operation would be managed through environmental management measures incorporated into a Project CEMP.

Dewatering drawdown is likely to be temporary, minor and localised, and impacts on groundwater dependent ecosystems (GDEs) are likely to be insignificant. Refuge pools in Merri Creek, considered GDEs and locations considered to provide important habitat during low flow or drought conditions are outside the expected area where groundwater drawdown would occur and not likely to be impacted. Environmental management measures would be implemented during construction to manage and mitigate impacts from dewatering.

Indirect impacts on fauna habitat may also occur from erosion/sedimentation, dust, litter or release of contaminants into wetland and waterways. Environmental management measures would increase the likelihood of these impacts being temporary and minor.

Project construction at night would require adequate lighting, which may disturb or displace native or non-native fauna. Efforts would be made to minimise the escape of light during the Project's construction with measures developed to minimise light spillage to protect significant native fauna habitat to the extent practicable. Disturbance of some fauna by light is unavoidable but is expected to be minor and localised. Similarly, noise and vibration impacts are expected to be highly localised and short term, moving with the construction front. Environmental management measures have been developed to manage noise and vibration during construction.

The risk of habitat fragmentation is low. The loss of habitat connectivity associated with the Project is expected to be temporary, localised, and minimal for most species. Habitat fragmentation would be minimised through Project design, measures to avoid accidental loss of habitat, and contractor awareness. Reinstatement of vegetation and topsoil management within the Project Area would reduce the long-term effect of additional habitat fragmentation.

Mitigation and management

Impacts have been minimised as far as practicable. However, since vegetation and habitat removal would occur, any further reduction on the residual impacts has not been achievable. Areas that are disturbed during construction would be reinstated. Indirect impacts on botanical values are expected to be minor and temporary during construction and operation of the Project. Indirect impacts on threatened flora and ecological communities or non-threatened flora may occur from erosion/sedimentation, dust, litter, release of contaminants or soil compaction. A range of environmental management measures have been developed related to air quality, surface water, and contamination to increase the likelihood of these impacts being temporary and minor.

Significant residual impacts associated with the unavoidable loss of TECs and threatened species habitat would be managed through Commonwealth offsetting as required under the EPBC Act. Removal of endangered EVCs, including native vegetation and large trees would be managed through a State offsetting arrangement in accordance with the guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation (DELWP, 2017a). Offsets for the loss of FFG Act-listed communities would be addressed through procurement of offsets for endangered EVCs Plains Grassland and Plains Grassy Woodland.

Residual impacts would be offset in accordance with the *Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation* (DELWP, 2017a) and Department of Environment policy. An Ecological Offset Strategy has been prepared.

The Project is considered to trigger a significant impact on the Striped Legless Lizard and the Golden Sun Moth. Offsets to address the significant residual impact on these species have been identified.

An Ecological Offsets Strategy has been prepared for the Project (refer EES Attachment II), addressing both State and Commonwealth requirements. This offset strategy also outlines the approach to preparing Offset Management Plans which in turn describe how the offsets will be secured, managed and monitored, including management actions, responsibility, timing, performance measures and the specific environmental outcomes to be achieved.

Project environmental management measures would be applied to avoid or minimise impacts on biodiversity and habitats during construction and operation, and include requirements for monitoring against baseline data. Residual impacts would be offset.

20.2.3 Water and catchment values

Evaluation objective: To maintain the functions and values of groundwater, surface water and floodplain environments and minimise effects on water quality and beneficial uses.

This objective was considered and assessed by:

- Technical report B *Surface water*
- Technical report C *Groundwater.*

Surface water

Twenty-three waterways are intersected by the Project alignment. Six of these were assessed as higher risk waterways and assessed in more detail, of these three main 'complex waterways' were identified and formed the focus of the surface water impact assessment: Jacksons, Deep and Merri creeks.

Potential impacts on surface water values were assessed, including erosion and changes to waterways. The crossing method at Jacksons, Deep and Merri creeks was a key factor in assessing potential impacts. Open trench construction is proposed at Jacksons and Merri creeks, and HDD is proposed at Deep Creek. The residual construction impacts on surface water and waterways are generally considered to be low following the application of both standard control measures and additional site-specific controls.

Potential impacts of erosion during open trench construction are identified as potentially more significant for Jacksons Creek than the other waterways due to complexities of the geomorphological processes and the exposure to more highly erodible materials below the surface. Additional controls relating to surface water and biodiversity monitoring, site-specific construction management and rehabilitation measures are essential to monitor and reduce the likelihood of unexpected erosion occurring at this waterway crossing.

Potential impacts due to permanent changes to the waterways are also identified as potentially more significant for bed and bank erosion at Jacksons Creek, than the other waterways. This can be reduced by additional design, construction and rehabilitation management measures implemented for Jacksons Creek to mitigate future erosion and prevent permanent changes.

Project environmental management measures would be implemented to minimise impacts that could lead to changes to surface water quality, flows and flooding, and erosion and damage to property and infrastructure. These include requirements for managing runoff from adjacent construction areas, managing discharge from dewatering activities or spills, waterway and floodplain function management during construction, site rehabilitation measures for disturbance caused by open cut trench construction, implementing a monitoring program in Jacksons Creek and Merri Creek, site-specific design and construction management measures at Jacksons Creek, and a Flood Management and Response Plan for Jacksons Creek, Deep Creek, Kalkallo Creek and Merri Creek.

With the implementation of mitigation measures, residual impacts during construction are considered to be low. For Jacksons Creek, potential unexpected erosion impacts to water quality, river health and surrounding property would be expected to be short term and promptly remediated to reduce the downstream extent and magnitude of the impact. For Merri Creek, residual impacts associated with unexpected erosion are considered to be low, given the presence of basalt at shallow depths. If unexpected erosion occurred, any potential impact to water quality would be expected to be short term and localised, and promptly remediated to reduce the downstream extent and magnitude of the impact. During operation, residual impacts associated with ongoing erosion are considered to be minimised.

Groundwater

If not appropriately managed, impacts on groundwater levels and flow paths associated with the construction or operation of a project may subsequently impact water availability or quality to groundwater dependent receptors, such as GDEs, surface water features receiving baseflows, groundwater users (such as existing bores), or cause migration of any existing contaminated groundwater or ground subsidence.

To assess the groundwater impacts from the construction and operation of the WORM project, a desktop assessment and field investigation program was undertaken. The assessment found that there are six areas where the pipeline may interact directly with the water table aquifer comprising approximately five per cent of the entire pipeline length. At these locations and where excavations are required that are deeper than the water table, this will require dewatering over short periods. This may impact local groundwater levels and flow paths.

During operation the pipe and the backfilled pipe trench may be below the water table which may also impact on groundwater levels and flow paths. Any potential residual impacts to the groundwater level close to the trench are considered to be low and management measures would minimise likelihood of the alignment becoming a preferential flow path and/or impact groundwater quality.

Project environmental management measures would be implemented to minimise impacts including minimising dewatering rates and impact on groundwater levels and flows, managing possible impacts on groundwater bore users (noting no existing bores within 50 metres), managing contaminated groundwater disposal, drilling fluid requirements, spoil management procedures, and pipeline design to prevent preferential flow paths.

With the implementation of mitigation measures, residual impacts during construction are considered to be low. Potential for ground settlement residual impacts on groundwater levels and flows are considered to be negligible. Potential for mobilisation of contaminated groundwater is considered to be remote and residual impacts associated with leaks or spills, drilling fluids or stockpiling are considered to be low to negligible. During operation, residual impacts associated with groundwater levels close to the trench and leaks and spills are considered to be low.

20.2.4 Cultural heritage

Evaluation objective: To avoid, or minimise where avoidance is not possible, adverse effects on Aboriginal and historic cultural heritage values.

This objective was considered by Technical report I *Cultural heritage*. In addition, two Cultural Heritage Management Plans (CHMPs 16593 and 16594) are being developed for the Project.

The extent of the impacts on Aboriginal places located within the construction corridor is subject to detailed assessment and liaison with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (WWCHAC) Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) for the in-progress CHMP 16593 (KP 8.2–KP 51). It is anticipated that construction impacts would occur to registered Aboriginal places due to disturbance of the construction corridor and that mitigation measures and management conditions including salvage excavations would be required prior to works commencing. The investigation for CHMP 16594 (KP 0–KP 8.2) is complete and the nature of existing heritage, mitigation and residual impacts have been assessed.

The CHMP investigations to date have identified 13 registered Aboriginal places within the construction corridor, and 24 registered Aboriginal places outside of the construction corridor but within 50 metres and where buffer zones may extend into the construction corridor.

Of the 13 registered places within the construction corridor, one is of high significance and three are of moderate significance. The remaining nine are less than moderate to extremely low significance or already removed. While mitigation measures would minimise the impact on places, the residual impact on the Aboriginal cultural heritage values could be moderate to high for some of the places. This will be confirmed with ongoing liaison with Traditional Owners through the CHMP assessment and mitigation measures. Construction is not expected to impact the 24 registered Aboriginal places outside of the construction corridor (within 50 metres). APA will continue to work with AV, WWCHAC RAP, and all Traditional Owners to assess the significance of the impacts and avoid and mitigate impacts as far as practicable.

Residual impacts remain as there would be a loss of Aboriginal cultural heritage values as a result of the Project. The residual impact of construction on unidentified Aboriginal cultural heritage values is moderate due to the comprehensive testing and assessment occurring through the CHMP process, the type and significance of places known to be in the area, and the contingency measures put in place through the CHMP should there be unexpected finds during construction. There are no anticipated operational residual impacts on Aboriginal places.

A total of 27 historical heritage sites are located within the Study Area (as defined in Technical report I *Cultural heritage*) – five are within 100 m of the construction corridor, including one delisted historic site and one VHI site, Holden Cobbled Stone Road (VHI H7822-2283), located within the construction corridor. No direct or indirect residual impact on the heritage values of these sites is predicted.

Based on the Project's construction methodology, there are no anticipated residual construction impacts to Holden Cobbled Stone Road. However, as the Project works are being undertaken within the curtilage of a listed historic site, a Consent application is required and any conditions on the Consent would be implemented through the Project CEMP. There are no anticipated operational impacts to Holden Cobbled Stone Road.

The construction corridor was assessed for potential historic heritage values. No other historic heritage sites or potential heritage values have been identified that would be impacted by construction. There are no anticipated construction or operational impacts on historic heritage sites located outside the construction corridor. The drystone wall associated with HO55 does not have heritage value within the construction corridor and the listed site does not extend into the construction corridor.
An unexpected finds procedure within the CEMP would provide the contingency measures that would be followed if any unknown historic heritage site, value or object is identified during construction.

There are no anticipated operational residual impacts on historic heritage values.

Application of the Project construction methodology, CHMPs and Project environmental management measures would avoid or minimise or manage the potential impacts on Aboriginal cultural heritage and historic heritage places within the construction corridor. Mitigation measures include implementing and complying with the CHMP management conditions.

20.2.5 Social, economic, amenity and land use

Evaluation objective: To minimise potential adverse social, economic, amenity and land use effects at local and regional scales.

This objective was considered and assessed by:

- Technical report D *Land stability and ground movement*
- Technical report F *Noise and vibration*
- Technical report G *Air quality*
- Technical report J *Landscape and visual*
- Technical report K *Land use*
- Technical report L *Social*.

Land stability and ground movement

Based on the review of existing conditions and the Project description, the key issues assessed in the report relate to trenchless crossing ground movement, slope stability and trench stability.

The assessment found that trenchless crossings encountering poor ground conditions may result in a minor (only aesthetic) level of asset damage as a result of ground strains, however loss of serviceability would not occur. Encountering cohesionless granular material in trench construction could result in trench wall collapse and result in localised impact on nearby land. There is potential for impact on slope stability in the valley north of the Jacksons Creek crossing.

Application of the Project environmental management measures would minimise impacts associated with land stability and ground movement. The measures include requirements for HDD trenchless bore management, adherence to third party asset clearances, development and implementation of a sodic soils management measures, and provision of trench support or battering to reduce the potential for slope or trench wall failure and associated impacts. Following implementation of the Project environmental management measures the potential residual impacts associated with land stability and ground movement are not considered to have a significant impact.

Noise and vibration

Where construction works would occur in proximity to sensitive receptors, construction activities may result in short-term noise and vibration impacts. Open trench construction has the potential to exceed the daytime noise criteria at some locations along the construction corridor where works would be undertaken close to the boundary of residential properties if there is no mitigation. Generally, there are less than five sensitive receptors in any particular location where construction is predicted to exceed the daytime criteria pre-mitigation. The exception to this is around Morefield Court in Diggers Rest where there are approximately eight sensitive receptors where daytime criteria could be exceeded. Construction is expected to progress at a rate of approximately 700 metres per day for open trenching and impacts would be short-term at sensitive receptors.

Noise from HDD and bore operations are predicted to be below the daytime criterion, however, as HDD and boring would sometimes be required during the evening and night-time, these activities have the potential to exceed the relevant evening and night noise criteria pre-mitigation. This is predicted to occur at several locations, with the largest number of impacted receptors at the bored crossing at Fraser Rise, Hillside and Donnybrook Road.

During the evening period it is estimated that less than 15 individual sensitive receptors are likely to be affected at each location where exceedances occur. Night time exceedances are predicted at 14 locations (without mitigation) along the construction corridor and there could be as many as 100 sensitive receptors in some locations, with more at Mickleham, Hillside and Fraser Rise. HDD and bored crossings could take between two to three weeks at a particular location and mitigation measures as outlined below would be required to avoid and minimise impacts during this time.

There are a number of sensitive receptors within 50 metres of the construction corridor with the potential to be impacted by vibration from construction activities. Vibration-generating activities such as excavation and drilling would be positioned as far as practical from nearby sensitive receptors. The separation distances from sensitive receptors to potential areas of blasting are sufficient so that structural damage criteria and human comfort levels are generally met, although marginal exceedances of the human comfort levels are expected for blasts with the use of charges greater than one kilogram. Use of an eight kilogram charge may be required at one location, in the northern end of the Project, and this charge may exceed the human comfort levels, but would be below the structural damage criterion. Prior to any blasting, a detailed blast study and impact management plan would be developed to confirm potential blasting impacts and identify any further management measures required such as the level of charge used.

Project environmental management measures have been developed to avoid and minimise impacts associated with noise and vibration during the construction of the Project. These include preparation of a Construction Noise and Vibration Plan detailing measures to avoid and minimise noise and vibration (such as those listed in detail in Chapter 12 *Noise and vibration*). Controls would be implemented suited to the individual locations and circumstances and could reduce the noise levels by 5 bB(A) with the implementation of standard mitigation measures to as much as 50 dB(A) where barriers or enclosures are used around equipment. With the implementation of on-site management measures, it is expected that noise could be reduced to meet the project noise criteria. However, in some locations the contractor may decide to use off-site mitigation measures to minimise noise impacts, and this may include alternative temporary accommodation. These alternate options may be employed for a number of reasons including timing and duration of impact, feasibility of installing mitigation (for example, barriers) or a receptor's sensitivity to the noise impact.

Measures to avoid and minimise the impacts of construction vibration would be considered in locations where sensitive receptors are located within 100 metres from construction and subject to vibration-generating construction activities. This would include measures such as alternative work methods, restricted hours, and increasing distance between equipment and sensitive receptor.

In the event that the residual noise and vibration impacts (after on-site management measures are implemented) exceed the recommended construction noise and vibration criteria or construction works are planned close to the sensitive receptors, information on the impact will be discussed with affected residents and individual mitigation would be implemented.

Prior to any blasting, a detailed blast study and impact management plan would be developed to confirm potential blasting impacts and identify any further management measures required.

With the mitigation in place, noise and vibration from the Project is expected to be below the Project noise and vibration criteria, and the potential residual noise, vibration and blasting impacts on sensitive receptors as a result of the Project's construction is considered to be low.

Noise from the operation of the expanded Wollert Compressor Station is predicted to comply with the applicable noise limits at all of the sensitive receptors during the day, evening and night-time.

Air quality

During construction of the Project, key air quality impacts would result from the creation of dust (PM_{10}). Certain construction phases are likely to generate slightly more dust than others. Trenching activities have the higher potential for dust, and would require mitigation measures where sensitive receptors are within 75 metre of the trenching works area in order to achieve relevant EPA Victoria air quality criteria trigger levels. As part of standard construction and environmental risk management, dust mitigation measures in a CEMP and dust monitoring would be implemented to reduce the likelihood, intensity or extent of dust effects and manage works to achieve the criteria.

Nonetheless, sensitive receptors near the construction corridor may be subject to dust emissions with a medium air quality impact rating, without additional mitigation measures. Additional mitigation measures would vary depending on the sensitive receptor context (for example, isolated rural residence or future urbanised area) and proximity to the construction corridor. There are no residential properties currently abutting the construction corridor.

Additional mitigation measures would include installing real time reactive monitors at isolated residences or a series of instruments for multiple residences leading to reducing or suspending works when real-time monitors 'alarm' and when adverse conditions are likely (for example, dry gusty winds with sensitive receptors nearby and downwind). In all cases, the implementation of additional mitigation measures would reduce the likelihood, intensity or extent of dust effects, resulting in low impacts on air quality to sensitive receptors.

During operation, air quality impacts would be limited to operation of the Wollert Compressor Station. Air dispersion modelling was conducted for CO, NO_2, PM_{10}, $PM_{2.5}$, PAHs, SO_2, benzene, formaldehyde, toluene and xylene which may be emitted by the Wollert Compressor Station under routine operations. Modelling assessed scenarios that took into account operation of the Compressor Station with and without the emergency generator. Based on the modelling, all emitted pollutants (with the exception of NO_2 and $PM_{2.5}$ in the scenario that includes the generator) comply with the relevant SEPP AQM design criteria. The predicted area of non-compliance for NO_2 and $PM_{2.5}$, when the standby engine is operating, is small in area and largely over the Wollert Compressor Station and well within the boundaries of the APA site (that is, not impacting sensitive receptor locations). When the emergency generator was not modelled – the scenario anticipated in the Environment Protection (Scheduled Premises) Regulations 2017– all pollutants complied with the relevant criteria for worst-case normal operations.

In developing the environmental management measures, the air quality assessment adhered to the mitigation hierarchy; that is, an obligation to first avoid, minimise, and then restore the residual impacts that remain. According to the Waste Hierarchy of SEPP AQM (Clause 8), avoidance is the first choice. This is possible for operation where technology choice (best practice) can be applied. The Project's compressor utilises best practice technology with low emissions and stack height design to ensure adequate dispersion. The operation effects are considered minimal and no additional mitigation is required.

The Project has been designed to prevent and minimise air pollutant emissions during construction and operation, incorporating best practice control measures. Effects of the Project on air quality have been assessed and environmental management measures have been identified which would minimise or avoid impacts on air quality and associated amenity values at a local scale.

Landscape and visual

The potential landscape and visual residual impacts as a result of the Project have been assessed as low given the short duration and temporary nature of the proposed construction activities, the pipeline being located underground, and the nature of the existing landscape.

The existing conditions assessment identified that a significant portion of land within the Study Area (as defined in Technical report J *Landscape and visual)* is experiencing rapid development of residential areas, where construction activity would already be a common occurrence in these areas. Additionally, in rural areas as well as along major roads and highways, construction activity would be observed in relation to farming activity and as part of road upgrade and maintenance works.

Vegetation clearance required for the pipeline generally presented the most significant landscape and visual impacts, particularly within areas of close proximity to creek corridors and semi-rural residential areas along the pipeline alignment. The highest landscape character impacts were found to occur in landscape character area (LCA) 1 – Creek corridor and LCA5 – Semi-rural residential which were assigned a moderate overall significance pre-mitigation. This is due to the potential for vegetation clearance altering the character of the landscape in sensitive areas (such as creek corridors).

Construction at Jacksons Creek is likely to require the removal vegetation, however, there are several large and small trees that would be retained adjacent to the construction corridor. At the Merri Creek crossing, two large native trees and one small native tree are likely to require removal, however a number of large and small trees would be retained. At both Jackson Creek and Merri Creek there would be a minor loss of vegetation which would not be uncharacteristic of the creekline environment, whereby there are already numerous gaps in vegetation cover.

Rehabilitation of land and replacement of screening trees and vegetation buffers where practicable would reduce impacts on views from public places or private residences with existing screening from road reserves to low.

Main line valve (MLV)1 would be co-located with the existing Sunbury Pipeline MLV facility and MLV2 is likely to be hidden from view given the existing roadside vegetation at the site, resulting in minimal residual visual impacts on the existing conditions. MLV3 would represent a discernible change to the existing view, however, it has the potential to be mitigated through applications such as planting to provide screening from roads or residences.

Lighting impacts as a result of the Project are expected to have negligible residual impact given their temporary nature and due to the nearest dwelling being located approximately 350 metres away from an HDD site (Deep Creek). There would be no night-time lighting from construction of the Project directly adjacent to residential areas elsewhere along the Project alignment.

The application of the Project's environmental management measures would minimise the residual landscape and visual impacts of the Project to low or negligible across the alignment.

The effects of the Project on landscape values and visual amenity have been assessed and environmental management measures have been identified to minimise or avoid impacts on landscape values and visual amenity.

Land use

The Project's construction related activities would result in temporary impacts on existing land uses within the construction corridor, predominantly agricultural land uses, which would be managed through the application of the proposed environmental management measures. The CEMP would require that the land is appropriately rehabilitated after construction is complete. Access to private properties may also be temporarily impacted during construction, and would be negotiated with private landowners through the Project's Consultation Plan and framework for compensation. Any predicted noise and dust impacts on agricultural and residential land uses would be managed through the Project CEMP, with monitoring and contingency measures also included. The residual impacts on agricultural land uses and access as a result of temporary changes during construction would be low. The residual impacts to amenity as a result of construction are also considered to be low.

Once the easement for the Project is registered and in operation, there would be restrictions on the use and development of land within the typically 15 metre easement corridor in accordance with the Pipelines Act and pursuant to easement agreements with landowners. Land use impacts during the operation phase of the Project would include ongoing minor limitations on land use within the green wedge, where an easement was not already present, with land unable to be used for structures or large vegetation. However, cropping and grazing would be able to continue within the easement. The potential impacts on the future use of land have been minimised through the use of existing pipeline easements and co-location with other linear infrastructure where appropriate. Engagement with directly affected landholders commenced in 2018 and would continue with individual negotiations through to agreement.

Impacts to Precinct Structure Plans (PSPs) and growth areas would be mitigated by protecting the pipeline with an easement and identifying the easement in PSPs along the Project. In locations with existing PSPs, the pipeline is designed in accordance with AS/NZS 2885 with consideration to planned PSP land use. There would be an ongoing requirement that future sensitive land uses would be managed within proximity of the pipeline with the 'Area of Consequence' length (65 metres) identified in future PSPs, as the area where a risk assessment of sensitive uses would be undertaken. Notification provisions in planning schemes would enable APA to assess any potential implications for sensitive uses in the 'Area of Consequence' along the pipeline easement.

The operational easement would provide an opportunity to increase open space and amenity within new urban areas to benefit the local community in line with the PSPs.

The Project is consistent with relevant state and local land use planning policy, and impacts on land use during construction and operation are considered to be low with the application of the relevant environmental management measures which would minimise or avoid impacts on land use values.

Social

The overall intensity of social impacts would vary between individuals and communities depending on their circumstances and levels of socio-economic advantage and vulnerability.

The construction of the Project would result in temporary residual land use changes to properties located along the alignment, within the construction corridor, and along access corridors. There are a number of areas where the construction corridor intersects properties and would act to separate functioning areas of those properties during the construction period, disrupting agricultural and rural residential land uses and businesses for individual property owners. However, following rehabilitation of the construction corridor, normal agricultural activities and production would resume.

When the Project's construction activities are at their peak, some nearby residents may experience residual changes to amenity, including character and privacy, noise and air quality (dust), which may lead to some residents temporarily experiencing reduced enjoyment of their property.

The Project's construction is expected to require traffic control and partial road closures for a number of roads which would result in temporary and minor increases in travel times.

Construction works would impact enjoyment and use of open spaces and sporting facilities located within 500 m of the construction corridor, reducing enjoyment of recreational activities in those locations. However, the Project is not expected to impact open space areas that provide for residential catchments or are the only available open space for a community. Therefore, it is not expected that community's access to open spaces would materially reduce as a result of Project activities. Construction works could result in reduced access to the Cao Dai Temple, however, access would be maintained. Works could also have residual noise impacts on the amenity and use of the Temple.

APA operational activities within the Project easement will consist of maintenance and inspections which will require only limited interaction with landholders and have insignificant effects on their wellbeing. The operational activities would generate minimal traffic, and are not likely to have any residual impact on amenity of community infrastructure.

The potential residual social impacts as a result of the Project's construction would be minor given the short duration and temporary nature of the proposed construction activities, and due to the proposed implementation of environmental management measures to mitigate and minimise any potential adverse social impacts on use of land or facilities by landholders or the community.

Application of the Project's environmental management measures would minimise construction impacts associated with amenity values for residents, community facilities and recreation areas located close to the alignment. The environmental management measures would also minimise access impacts of the Project at a local and regional scale. Should there be any adverse residual effects on land and amenity during construction, including noise and air quality, contingency measures would be implemented.

During operation, with the pipeline being located underground and the operation activities being minimal, the residual social impact on character and privacy, noise and air quality would be negligible.

20.2.6 Waste management

Evaluation objective: To minimise generation of wastes from the Project during construction and operation, and to prevent adverse environmental or health effects from storing, handling, transporting and disposing of waste products.

This objective was considered and assessment by:

- Technical report E *Contamination*
- Technical report H *Greenhouse gas.*

In addition, the air quality assessment considered waste (air quality impacts) associated with the compressor station emissions.

Greenhouse gas

The greenhouse gas assessment for the construction and operation of the Project concluded the following:

- The Project's estimated Scope 1 and Scope 2 construction emissions are estimated to contribute the equivalent of 0.019% of Victoria's and 0.004% of Australia's annual greenhouse gas emissions. This is largely attributed to land use changes due to removal of vegetation in the construction corridor and emissions associated with fuel use
- The Project's annual Scope 1 and Scope 2 operation emissions are estimated to contribute the equivalent of 0.014% of Victoria's and 0.003% of Australia's annual greenhouse gas emissions. This is largely attributed to fuel use at the compressor station
- Operation of the Project is predicted by AEMO to lead to efficiency gains in the overall Victorian gas supply network, leading to a net reduction in total greenhouse gas emissions across the VTS. The net reduction in state and national emissions would equate to 10,110 t CO_2-e per annum, which equates to a reduction of 0.010% and 0.002% of state and national totals respectively.

Application of the Project environmental management measures would minimise impacts associated with greenhouse gas by further reducing construction and operation emissions. These include consideration and use of low embodied energy materials, fuel efficient plant and equipment, locally sourced materials, and reduction of vegetation removal along the pipeline alignment. During operation, implementation of the Protocol for Environmental Management (PEM): Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Energy Efficiency in Industry 2001 would include consideration of energy efficiency best practice.

Where the effect of the mitigation measure is known, the estimated greenhouse gas emissions represent the residual impacts (for example, the consideration of energy efficiency best practice in the selection of the compressor type). In other cases, the residual impacts are not currently known (for example, emissions from low embodied energy materials is not possible without knowing the specific materials to be used). However, as Technical report H *Greenhouse gas* has assessed standard practice and is therefore considered conservative, by implementing the mitigation measures, the residual impacts are expected to be reduced and emissions impacts are expected to be minor.

Contamination

The contamination assessment identified the risks and potential impacts of the construction and operation of the Project on human health and the environment as a result of disturbance and management of contaminated soils and groundwater, acid sulfate soils and other wastes.

A desktop assessment and limited soil sampling was undertaken. No contamination was identified at locations sampled and the results indicated that shallow soils are likely suitable for reuse at the site of origin in areas not identified as potential sources of contamination. 11 sites were identified as containing potential sources of contamination, which were assessed as a part of the contamination impact assessment, leading to requirements for further testing and management conditions. It is noted that further testing is required at a small number of potential contaminant sources, including additional testing for PFAS at two creek crossings where there is higher risk of contaminated groundwater. Although potential acid sulfate soils and actual acid sulfate soils were not identified in the samples assessed, further sampling and analysis may be required, especially if excavating soils beneath the water table.

There is potential for regional groundwater contamination impacts from landfills. Due to the Project design and construction methodology, where the Project is approximately 500 metres away from the landfill, the Project is unlikely to interact with groundwater in these areas. Analysis of groundwater to date at locations sampled has also not identified contamination.

Waste streams considered for the Project construction include commercial and industrial waste (such as pipelining wastes, timber and steel), construction waste (such as spoil and rock), and domestic waste (such as putrescible and general waste, plastic, paper and cardboard packing).

The Project environmental management measures require spoil and waste to be classified and managed in accordance with relevant regulations, standards and guidelines, and the CEMP. During construction, environmental management measures include requirements for classifying spoil and managing existing contamination, HDD fluids, uncontaminated spoil, unknown contamination, chemicals, fuels and hazardous materials, waste streams and hydrostatic test water. Furthermore, the Project includes requirements for minimising potential impacts and risks from disturbance of acid sulfate soil, contaminated groundwater, and vapour and ground gas intrusion.

During operation and maintenance activities, waste and contamination impacts associated with leaks and spills would be managed in accordance with the existing VTS OEMP.

With the implementation of mitigation measures, residual impacts including disturbance and management of existing contamination, exposure to ground gases and vapour, mobilisation of contaminated groundwater, disturbance of unidentified contamination, leaks and spills, and contamination due to blow-out, are minimised and considered to be low. Furthermore, residual impacts associated with contamination in hydrostatic test water is considered to be negligible. During operation, residual impacts associated with fuel or chemical spills causing contamination to soil and waste impacting human health and the environment are considered to be low.

20.3 Environmental Management Framework

Chapter 19 *Environmental Management Framework* presents the proposed environmental management arrangements for Project delivery. It sets out the statutory approvals and agreements that underpin the environmental management plans and measures required to manage the environmental effects identified in the EES. It also sets out the Environmental Management System to be adopted, environmental monitoring requirements, an overview of environmental management plans and environmental management measures (EMMs), and the proposed approach to evaluating and reporting environmental outcomes and performance.

The environmental management arrangements, including the EMMs have been informed by relevant legislation, policy, guidelines, specialist technical reports completed as part of the EES as well as APA systems and processes. In particular, under Section 133(1) of the Pipelines Act, APA is required to develop an environmental management plan for the Project for approval by the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change.

APA would develop, implement and maintain environmental management plans for both the construction and operation of the Project. These would address the requirements of the statutory approvals and consents and contain processes, procedures and requirements to protect environmental and social values potentially impacted by the Project.

A draft Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) has been prepared and is included with the Pipeline Licence Application documents exhibited with the EES. This draft CEMP would be updated following the EES process and submitted to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change for approval. The existing VTS Operation Environmental Management Plan would apply to the operational phase of the Project.

20.4 Next steps

Making a submission

The EES and Pipeline Licence will be on public exhibition for 30 business days from 7 July 2021 to 17 August 2021. During this time, members of the public can view the EES and make written submissions. Submissions on the EES must be made in writing and received by 11.59 pm on Tuesday 17 August 2021. Online submissions are preferred and can be made to Planning Panels Victoria via the following website: www.engage.vic.gov.au/worm-inquiry. A hard copy submission must be accompanied by a coversheet available only by calling the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning on 136 186.

Each written submission must have its own coversheet and they cannot be copied. All submissions must state the name and address of the person making the submission. Where a submission is made by two or more persons (including an organisation), it must state the name and address of the person who will speak to the submission in any public hearing and be the contact person for the submission. Anonymous submissions will not be considered. All submissions will be treated as public documents.

For more information about the EES and Pipeline Licence Application submission process, contact the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning on 136 186.

Concluding the EES process

At the end of the exhibition period, the Minister for Planning is expected to appoint the Inquiry to evaluate the effects of the Project, having regard to the EES and public submissions. A Panel may also be appointed by the Minister for Energy to consider the submissions received in relation to the Pipeline Licence.

The Inquiry may take one of two forms: a conference of submitters and a review of submissions, or a formal hearing where the proponent and submitters can speak and present expert witnesses.

Following receipt of the Inquiry's report, the Minister for Planning would prepare an assessment of the environmental effects of the Project that considers the EES documents, public submissions, the proponent's response and the Inquiry report. This assessment is usually provided within 25 days of the Inquiry's report being finalised. The Minister's assessment may conclude that the project:

- Would have an acceptable level of environmental effects, or
- Would have an unacceptable level of environmental effects, or
- Would need major modifications and/or further investigations to establish that acceptable outcomes would be achieved.

After considering the Victorian Minister for Planning's assessment under the EE Act, the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment or their delegate will decide whether the Project is approved, approved with conditions or refused under the EPBC Act.

Chapter 5 *Evaluation and assessment framework* outlines the statutory approvals required for the Project. Approval authorities would take into account the Minister's Assessment in determining approvals following the release of the Minister's Assessment.