

Victorian Desalination Project
**Environment Effects
Statement**

Summary Brochure



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Introduction

Background

The Victorian Government proposes to construct a seawater desalination plant west of Wonthaggi, together with ancillary infrastructure, to supply water to the Melbourne Water supply system and other regional supply systems.

The Victorian Government has decided that, if approved, the desalination plant would be delivered as a Public Private Partnership (PPP) and is expected to be operational by the end of 2011.

The Minister for Planning decided in December 2007 that the Victorian Desalination Project (Project) required assessment under the Environment Effects Act 1978 (Vic)(EE Act). In addition, assessment and approval is required under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth) (EPBC Act). The Victorian EES process has been accredited as the assessment approach for the purposes of the EPBC Act.

The Secretary to the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) is the proponent for the Project on behalf of the Minister for Water. Under the direction of the Secretary, the Capital Projects Division of DSE is responsible for the development of the Project and the preparation of this Environment Effects Statement (EES). The Minister for Planning has directed that the EES be exhibited for 30 business days to enable the public to make submissions regarding the environmental effects of the Project. The EES responds to the Scoping Requirements for the EES issued by the Minister for Planning, and is in accordance with *Ministerial guidelines for assessment of environmental effects under the Environment Effects Act 1978*.

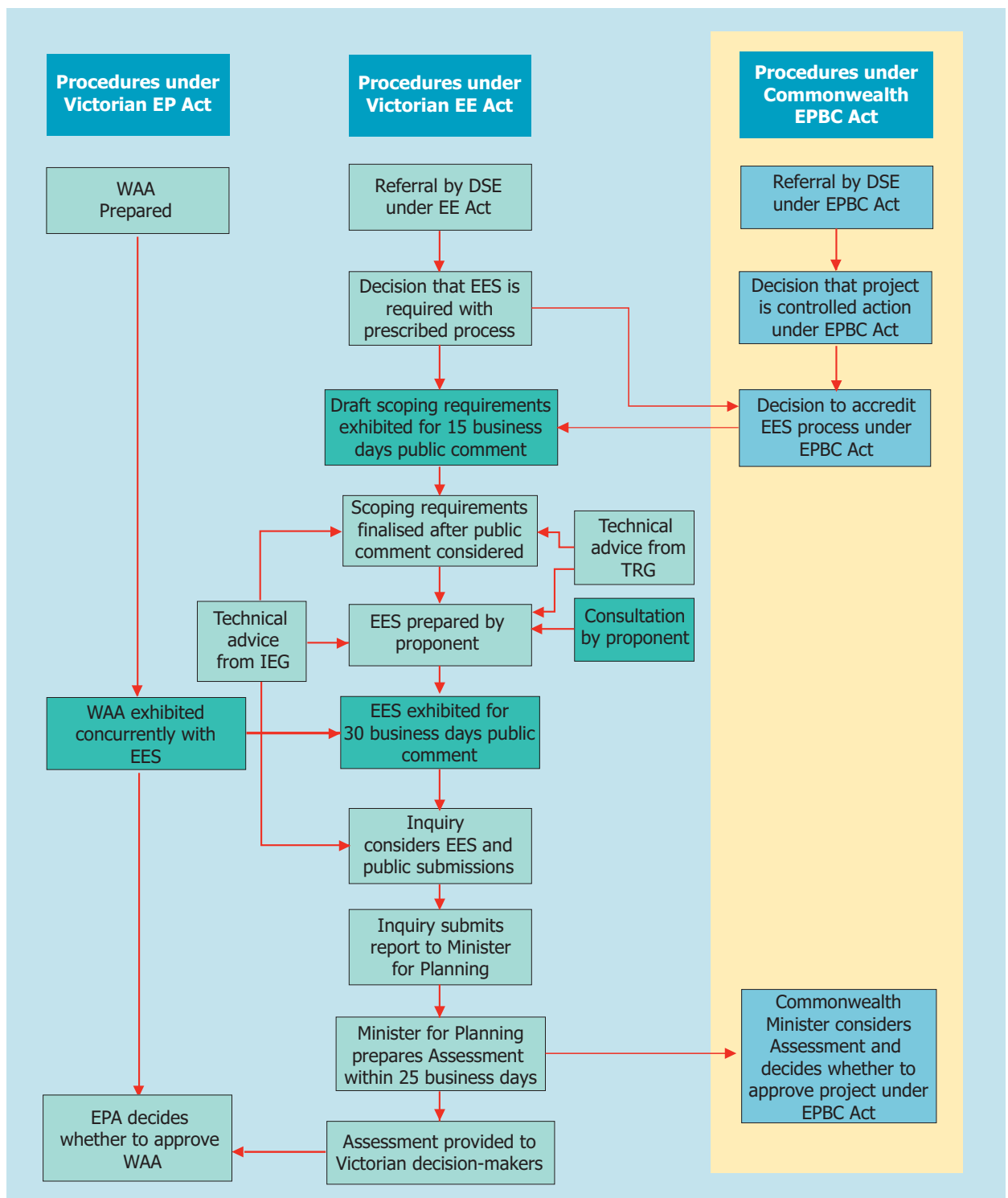
A Works Approval Application (WAA) under the *Environment Protection Act 1970* (Vic)(EP Act) has been prepared by DSE and is exhibited concurrently with the EES.

The steps in the EES process are set out in Figure 1.

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Figure 1 Overview of the EES, WAA and EPBC Approval Processes





The Minister for Planning intends to appoint an Inquiry under the EE Act to consider the EES, public submissions and provide a report to the Minister. The Minister will then prepare his Assessment of the environmental effects of the Project under the EE Act. Formally, the Minister for Planning's Assessment will be provided to the relevant decision makers including the Victorian Minister for Environment and Climate Change, the Victorian Environment Protection Authority and the Australian Government Minister for Environment, Heritage and the Arts.

Project Rationale

For more than a decade, large parts of southern and eastern Australia have suffered from drought conditions that are without historical precedent. Record low levels of rainfall have had significant implications for those Australian urban centres and communities that rely on surface water resources for urban water supply.

For example, inflows into the four major harvesting reservoirs for Melbourne during 2006 were the lowest in almost 100 years of recorded history, being in the order of 165 gigalitres as opposed to the long-term annual average of 590 gigalitres. The ten-year period from 1997 to 2006 saw three major drought years in total and no year in which annual inflow was higher than the long-term average. Combined with inflows during 2007 and 2008 to date, this has resulted in storage levels declining from almost full capacity in 1996 to less than 30% of capacity in June 2008. Low storage levels create a significant risk that the Melbourne water supply system will be unable to satisfactorily meet demand in the event that another year of extremely low inflows occurs, such as that observed in 2006.

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In 2004, the Victorian Government put in place a long-term plan for water – *Our Water Our Future: Securing Our Water Future Together*. In accordance with this Plan, a comprehensive strategy for the sustainable use of water resources in central Victoria was developed and released in 2006 – the *Central Region Sustainable Water Strategy*. This Strategy highlighted the importance of being prepared for the possibility that the low inflows to storages experienced over the past ten years may continue. The Strategy therefore identified that rainfall-independent sources of water may be necessary to meet the future water needs of Melbourne, and committed to the completion of a feasibility study for seawater desalination options for Melbourne.

The confirmation of unprecedented low inflows in the calendar year of 2006 demonstrated the need for large-scale augmentations for the Melbourne water supply system. In response to the risk that Victoria's worst drought will continue, the Victorian Government released the next stage of its plan for water in June 2007 – *Our Water Our Future: the Next Stage of the Government's Water Plan*. This Plan provides long-term solutions to secure Victoria's water supplies by:

- diversifying and boosting water supplies in Melbourne
- networking water resources across the State through the Water Grid
- enabling a rapid and flexible response to changing water needs.

The Plan provides the biggest boost to Victoria's water supplies in 25 years and includes the development of a new seawater desalination plant on the Bass Coast, modernising irrigation infrastructure in northern Victoria, expanding the Water Grid and extending water conservation and recycling programs.

The Project

Project Objectives

The overarching objective of *Our Water Our Future – the Next Stage of the Government's Water Plan* under which the Project is being progressed is to provide water security for Victoria's growing population and economy in the face of drought and the challenge of climate change. The State's objectives for the Project are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 State Government objectives for the Victorian Desalination Project

Project Objectives

Time objectives

- To commence delivery of desalinated water from the Project to Victoria's water supply system by the end of 2011

Scope objectives

- To provide Victoria with a rainfall-independent supply of initially up to 150 GL of desalinated water per year
- To allow for the efficient future expansion of the Project to supply up to 200 GL of desalinated water per year
- To ensure desalinated water delivered meets the State's water quality requirements
- To retain the flexibility to vary supplies over time to support optimisation of Victoria's water supply system
- To deliver the Project in a manner consistent with the State's policy of retaining ownership and management of water resources in public hands

Value for money objectives

- To deliver innovative solutions and overall value for money to the State through a whole of life approach to service delivery, risk management and the design, construction, operation and maintenance of the Project

Environmental objectives

- To minimise the environmental impact of the Project through design and appropriate risk management and mitigation measures and in particular, to minimise adverse impacts on the coastal and marine environment from construction activity, visual intrusion, noise and waste discharge and disposal
- To protect the beneficial uses of the coastal and marine environment, including the landscape and recreational values of the adjacent coastal reserve
- To optimise energy efficiency and ensure that 100% of the electricity used in operating both the Plant and the Transfer Pipeline would be offset by the purchase of renewable energy credits. This would be in addition to the State's current renewable energy targets

Social objectives

- To maximise benefits to the local community and wider economy within relevant Victorian Government policy frameworks
- To establish and maintain the highest levels of health and safety throughout the delivery and operation of the Project
- To minimise disruption to the surrounding area during construction

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Effect of PPP on EES

Conventional approaches to an EES often describe a project under assessment in its intended, final form. In the case of the Victorian Desalination Project, the State wishes to benefit from comparing different solutions developed by the bidders to meet the Project Objectives and outputs expressed as Performance Requirements.

As the EES and tender process are being implemented in parallel, the EES accommodates possible solutions put forward through the PPP process. For this reason, the environmental Performance Requirements of the Project (which are to form the basis for the contractual obligations for private sector delivery) are included in this EES.

Project Components

The Project incorporates the following four components:


- Marine Structures consisting of the seawater intake and the saline concentrate outlet structures
- Desalination Plant with reverse osmosis desalination technology
- Transfer Pipeline (approximately 85 kilometres) connecting the Desalination Plant to the Melbourne water supply network
- Power Supply to the Desalination Plant and Transfer Pipeline.

These components are assessed in four separate volumes of the EES and are supported by EES Technical Appendices.

Project Description

The Project Description and subject matter of this EES is:

- the Performance Requirements
- the Reference Project
- Variations.



The environmental Performance Requirements govern the Project for EES purposes, and in their final form are intended to be the basis for any contract with the Project Company. The Performance Requirements set the environmental parameters for the Project.

The Reference Project is an integrated response to the Performance Requirements developed by the State. It is used in this EES to demonstrate the Project's feasibility and ability to achieve acceptable environmental outcomes.

Variations contemplate other design and management solutions which also meet the Performance Requirements and are within the scope of this EES assessment.

In addition, the EES identifies Options that may potentially be of interest to the Project but which have not been considered further for technical or commercial reasons, or because they did not appear to offer significant advantages over the Reference Project. While these Options have not been fully assessed in the EES they are matters upon which comment is invited. Any further process for the Options will be determined by the Minister for Planning prior to any endorsement by the State for utilisation in the Project.

Reference Project and Variations

A Reference Project has been developed as the basis for environmental impact and risk assessment in the EES. The Reference Project demonstrates a feasible way that the Project could achieve the State's objectives and the environmental Performance Requirements. It provides an appropriate basis for assessing the expected range of environmental impacts, while recognising that altered or additional impacts may result from configuring the Project differently.

The EES studies have focused substantially on the Reference Project. To determine the Reference Project to be assessed in the EES a broad range of concepts were developed for different aspects of the Project; these were then assessed for technical feasibility and subsequently for compliance with the Project Objectives. This process resulted in a matrix of opportunities from which a combination was selected for the Reference Project. Other opportunities were obtained as Variations to the Reference Project and have been included in the Assessment.

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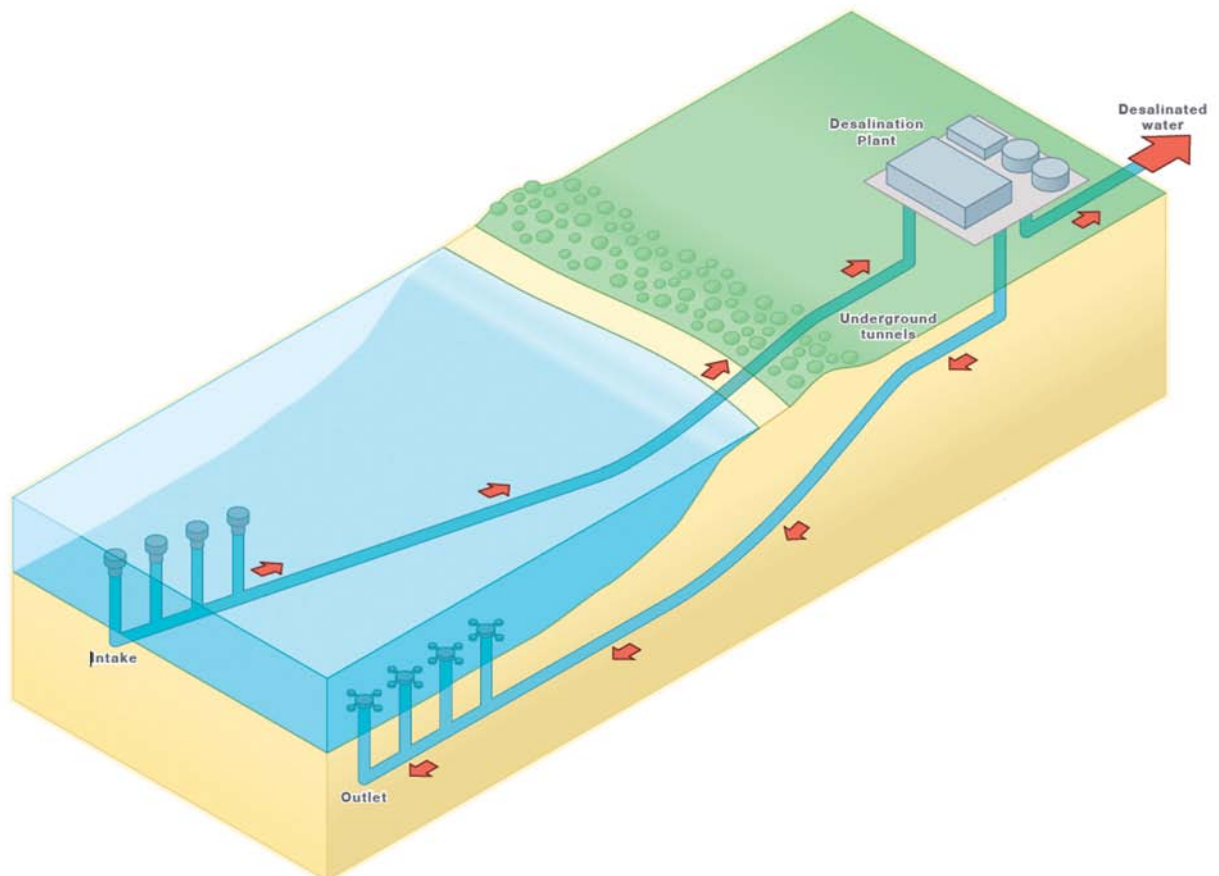
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Marine Structures

The Marine Structures would deliver seawater to the Desalination Plant and provide for removal of the saline concentrate from the desalination process. The Marine Structures would be located approximately one to two kilometres offshore from the Desalination Plant, in an open coastal environment.

The Marine Structures comprise the seawater intake and saline concentrate outlet conduits together with solutions for reducing the intake of marine organisms and diffusing the saline concentrate discharged back to ocean. A schematic illustration of the Marine Structures and connection to the Desalination Plant is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Schematic illustration of Marine Structures and Desalination Plant



The indicative seawater intake and saline concentrate volumes associated with producing up to 200 GL per year of potable water through the desalination process are outlined in Table 2 below.

Table 2 Marine Structures approximate capacity

Indicative volume	Design capacity	
	150 GL per year	200 GL per year
Seawater intake	360 GL per year	480 GL per year
Saline concentrate outlet	210 GL per year	280 GL per year
Potable water	150 GL per year	200 GL per year

Desalination Plant

The proposed site for the Desalination Plant is located approximately 90 kilometres south-east of Melbourne between the townships of Wonthaggi and Kilcunda in South Gippsland.

Land has been acquired for this purpose by the State near the mouth of the Powlett River. It covers 264 hectares of cleared farmland adjacent to a coastal reserve comprising sand dunes, Williamsons Beach and offshore areas.

An aerial photograph of the site is provided in Figure 3. The site offers access to ocean water from Bass Strait and its freely circulating waters, which would help to disperse the Plant's saline concentrate outflow.

The Lower Powlett Road is a dirt road that provides access to Williamsons Beach and the limited number of residential properties located along Lower Powlett Road. While Lower Powlett Road and Mouth of Powlett Road both provide road access to the Desalination Plant site, Lower Powlett Road will be upgraded as the principal point of access to the site.

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The Desalination Plant would draw seawater via underground conduits. The seawater would then be desalinated using reverse osmosis membranes and pumped to the Melbourne water supply network. The saline concentrate that is a by-product of the process would be returned to the sea.

Figure 3 Desalination Plant site



Transfer Pipeline

Water would be transferred from the Desalination Plant to the Melbourne water supply system via a dedicated pipeline with the capacity to transfer up to 200 GL per year of potable water. The Transfer Pipeline corridor is shown in red in Figure 4. The potable water would be pumped north approximately 85 kilometres to Berwick, where it would connect into Melbourne Water infrastructure to allow wide distribution through the Melbourne water supply network and potentially connect to regional water authorities.



A 400-metre wide corridor was selected for investigation. The Transfer Pipeline alignment would be located within this corridor, subject to potential minor variations. The construction easement would be approximately 30 metres wide, and a final easement would be between 15 and 20 metres wide. The pipeline would be installed underground and would not be visible in the longer term.

Figure 4 The Desalination Project in a regional context



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Power Supply

The Power Supply considered in the Reference Project is the connection to the existing power supply network via a 220 kV northerly grid connection, which is shown in Figure 4. The grid based connection was one of three suites of Options investigated, the others being gas and hybrid power.

The EES submits for assessment a Reference Project (with Variations). However, no decision has been made by the State as to the final form of the Project. As a Partnerships Victoria Project it is expected that a range of energy solutions could be brought forward by proponents. For example, power supply could be provided by any one of the Power Supply Options outlined in this EES.

A 40-metre wide easement would be required for the construction and operation of the Power Supply. A 500-metre wide corridor has been investigated in the EES. The Power Supply alignment would be within this corridor, subject to potential minor variations. The Power Supply corridor has been selected to minimise disturbance to residential areas, existing services and vegetation.

In policy terms there is a strong preference for the use of a renewable energy source directly connected to the Desalination Plant. However, there are constraints on the use of a dedicated source as follows:

- Local wind and or solar generating plant cannot substitute for a grid connection or a gas-fired plant as there will be an almost continuous power demand from the Desalination Plant and at times of little or no wind, or solar insulation, the electrical demand of the Desalination Plant could not be supplied.
- The nature of the integrated energy supply market makes it difficult to distinguish between energy sources contributing to the grid such that renewable energy can only really be 'sourced' directly (with the adverse features outlined above) or from the grid through renewable energy offsets.

For these reasons, it is considered impractical for the supply of energy to the Desalination Plant, to be directly and wholly from renewable sources. However, the electrical energy from more conventional sources consumed by the Desalination Plant could be offset by new renewable sources of electrical energy constructed nearby or elsewhere in Victoria (or possibly further afield). In recognition of this, the State has made a commitment that 100 per cent of the electricity used in operating both the Desalination Plant and the Transfer Pipeline is to be offset by the purchase of renewable energy credits from generation sources, commissioned after 1 January 2007. This is in addition to current renewable energy targets in the *Victorian Renewable Energy Act 2006*. This is a significant commitment by the Victorian Government to fully offset greenhouse gas emissions from electricity usage.

Variations and Options

Table 3 shows the Reference Project and Variations to be assessed within the scope of this EES, together with the Options on which public comment is invited. It does so for each of the four Reference Project components (Marine Structures, Desalination Plant, Transfer Pipeline and Power Supply).

Table 3 Summary of Reference project, Variations and Options

Key elements	Reference Project	Variation	Option
Marine Structures			
Intake concept	Direct intake in deep water		Seabed filtration
Marine conduits	Large tunnels and shafts	Multiple conduits/pipes on the seabed	Tunnel and then pipes trenched into seabed
Intake head	Mushroom structure		
Intake screening	Grill on intake head Active screen onshore	Passive fine screen at intake head	
Concentrate outlets	Rosette diffuser	Pipeline diffuser	

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Key elements	Reference Project	Variation	Option
Marine Structures			
Marine Structure locations	Offshore on low profile reef	Alternative locations	
Desalination Plant			
Pre-treatment concept	Media filtration	Additional clarification processing such as Dissolved Air Flotation (DAF)	
		Membrane Filtration (MF/UF)	
Pre-treatment waste management	Landfill disposal		Ocean Disposal
Brine disposal	Ocean disposal		
Transfer Pipeline			
Corridor/alignment	Corridor with normal alignment	Alignment deviation within corridor	Alternative corridor/alignment
Booster pump station	Normal location on alignment		Elsewhere on alignment
Dosing facility	Dosing facility at plant		Dosing facility at Booster Pump Station
Power Supply			
Grid connection corridor/alignment	Grid connection - northerly	Alternative alignment within corridor	Alternative corridor/alignment
			Grid connection underground - Tynong North to Woolamai
			Gas-fired power station on plant site and gas supply lines
			Hybrid - gas-fired power station and wind farm



Conclusions of the EES

The Desalination Project is crucial infrastructure to secure water supply against the effects of rainfall dependency. The need for such security is compelling given a decade-long drought, unprecedented population growth and the risks associated with climate change. The Government is committed to delivering an operational 150 GL plant by the end of 2011 to replenish depleted storages and ease water restrictions. Provision is also being included for a potential future upgrade to 200 GL per annum capacity.

Most components of the Desalination Project – water transmission pipelines, electricity power lines, booster and sub-stations, manufacturing/treatment plant are familiar in the Victorian landscape and have relatively predictable environmental impacts. These impacts are concentrated in the construction phase and lessen during operations, save for ongoing visual or noise impacts in some cases.

The less familiar elements of the Project are the desalination process, and its impacts on the marine environment. However, with several desalination plants now either operating or under construction interstate, the only aspect of the Project that is without precedent is its scale. While that scale requires special attention to be given to the greenhouse gas implications of the energy (and in particular electricity) consumption by the Plant and the need to manage waste streams effectively, the Government's commitment to 100 per cent offset the operational electricity consumption by the Plant and Transfer Pipeline and to best practice outcomes for waste streams help to address these issues of scale. These aspects of the Project would be subject to ongoing monitoring by the Project Company, and to continuing regulation through the EPA License and statutory emissions reporting and accountability.

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Care has been exercised in the selection of technologies for the Reference Project and Variations to minimise environmental impacts to the extent practicable for a project of this scale. These have been assessed against the evaluation criteria, legislative and policy requirements and best practice outcomes. The Project is also subject to Performance Requirements to ensure that, whatever form of the Project eventuates from the PPP process, it would comply with these requirements.

No long-term or irreversible damage to the environment from the Project has been identified by either the risk assessment or the more detailed impact assessment. Given the social and economic benefits of a securing Melbourne's future water supply, the Project can properly be regarded as delivering a strong community benefit.

EPA Works Approval Application

Establishment of a desalination plant that has a capacity to process more than one megalitre of feed water per day requires a works approval from EPA. A document titled Victorian Desalination Project – Works Approval Application (WAA) has been prepared for the Project and is being exhibited for public comment at the same time as the EES.

In considering the WAA, EPA must be satisfied that the proposal meets key regulatory and best practice requirements and criteria. The WAA draws from a number of the investigations published with the EES and discusses the outcomes of the EES environmental impact and risk assessment relevant to the WAA. A brief overview of the WAA and its contents is provided in Table 4:

Table 4 Overview of WAA Structure and Contents

Section	Title	Content
Section 1	Introduction	Provides context and a general overview of the proposal for which a works approval is being sought, and an overview of the approach adopted for the WAA.
Section 2	Environmental Evaluation Framework and Criteria	Outlines the environmental evaluation framework adopted for the WAA, and highlights key regulatory and best practice requirements / criteria.
Section 3	Other Approval Processes	Discusses other approvals required for the Desalination Project.
Section 4	Identification of Key Risks	Provides a summary of the methodology and findings of the risk assessment process, used to identify issues of significance.
Section 5	Site Description	Describes key features of the Desalination Plant site.
Section 6	Project Description	Describes relevant components of the Project. Discusses the development of the Reference Project, the key elements of the Reference Project and the Variations for which approval is sought.
Section 7	Evaluation Against Best Practice Criteria	Provides a discussion of best practice design considerations for relevant components of the Project. An evaluation of the Reference Project, and Variations, against the relevant best practice criteria is made.
Section 8	Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Provides an assessment of the expected energy consumption and related greenhouse gas emissions associated with the project. Energy efficiency measures are discussed.
Section 9	Waste Management	Outlines key objectives for the project with respect to waste management includes implementation of waste hierarchy. Major waste generating activities are identified and appropriate waste management methods are discussed.
Section 10	EREP	Addresses the requirements of an Environment and Resource Efficiency Plan (EREP), so that an exemption from the EREP program may be sought for the Project.
Sections 11 to 16	Detailed Environmental Impact Assessments (various)	These sections summarise the outcomes of detailed EES environmental impact and risk assessments relevant to the WAA.
Section 17	Environmental Management and Monitoring	This section describes the Environmental Management Framework developed for the Desalination Project, including a summary of specific environmental management measures. Proposed monitoring and reporting programs are discussed.

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Best Practice Considerations

Consistent with the requirements as set out by various State Environment Protection Policies (SEPP) and Waste Management Plans (WMPs), the WAA provides for the adoption and implementation of best practice to facilitate the protection of beneficial uses of the receiving environment from potential risks posed by emissions.

Best practice encompasses consideration of resource usage and emissions to segments of the environment as part of environmental impact. Whilst best practice is a driver for minimisation of environmental impacts, it is accepted that there may be a trade-off between environmental issues in the interests of achieving of overall environmental benefit of the Project.

The WAA sets out best practice design, construction, and operational objectives and works approval specific evaluation criteria based upon EP Act and SEPPs. These have been developed for relevant components of the Project. Reference is made to these criteria in assessing the Reference Project, and its Variations, against best practice.

Environment and Resource Efficiency Considerations

The WAA has considered EPA Victoria's Environment and Resource Efficiency Plans (EREP) program. This is a new regulatory scheme that requires large energy and water users to assess their environmental resource use and waste generation, develop an integrated resource efficiency action plan and report on its implementation.

The WAA seeks to demonstrate that resource efficiency has been considered and adopted to the extent practicable for the Reference Project and project component Variations included within the scope of the application.

EES Exhibition

The Minister for Planning has approved the exhibition of the EES for 30 business days for public comment. Any interested person is able to make a submission on this EES. Submissions will be independently reviewed by the Inquiry appointed by the Minister.

Details of the EES exhibition and Inquiry processes, including how to make a submission, can be found online at www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/planning/ees

General questions relating to the EES process should be directed to the Department of Planning and Community Development by telephoning (03) 9637 9624. Enquiries specifically related to the Inquiry process should be directed to Planning Panels Victoria by telephoning (03) 9637 9692.

Where to view the EES and Works Approval Application

Exhibition venue	Address	Exhibition venue	Address
InfraLib Department of Transport (phone 9655 8600 before visiting)	Level 5, 121 Exhibition St, Melbourne	Cardinia City Council	Henty Way Pakenham Magid Drive, Narre Warren
EPA Victoria	Display Centre, Ground Floor, Herald and Weekly Times Tower 40 City Road, Southbank	City of Casey Council Cranbourne Library	65 Berwick-Cranbourne Road, Cranbourne
EPA Victoria South Metro Region	35 Langhorne Street, Dandenong	Narre Warren Library	Overland Drive, Fountain Gate
EPA Victoria, Gippsland Region	7 Church Street, Traralgon	Pakenham Library	John Street, Pakenham
State Library of Victoria	328 Swanston Street, Melbourne	South Gippsland Shire Council	9 Smith Street, Leongatha
Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts	Resources Library John Gorton Building King Edward Terrace, Parkes, ACT	South Coast Mobile Library	Contact the Regional Support Centre 5622 2849
Bass Coast Shire Council	76 McBride Ave, Wonthaggi	Wonthaggi Library	Watt Street, Wonthaggi
		Phillip Island Library	89 Thompson Ave, Cowes
		Korumburra Library	165 Commercial Street, Korumburra
		Project Information Office	1 McBride Avenue, Wonthaggi

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The EES can also be viewed and downloaded at no cost from the website **www.ourwater.vic.gov.au**

It should be noted that because of the large size of the EES document and its Technical Appendices, it is separated into a number of PDF documents on the website. Broadband access is recommended.

Obtaining a copy of the EES

To purchase copies of the EES Main Report or Technical Reports or Works Approval Application contact the DSE Desalination Project Team by:

- email: desalination.project@dse.vic.gov.au
- phone: 1800 811 214 or 5671 3900

Hard copy set of all EES documentation \$250.00

Hard copies of the EES Main Report can be purchased for \$70.00

Hard copies of the EES Main Report (for each volume) \$20.00

Hard copies of Technical Reports (each) \$10.00

EPA Works Approval Application \$25.00

The EES Summary Brochure and a CD-ROM of the complete EES Main Report and Technical Reports are available at no cost at the exhibition locations. They may also be obtained from the Project Information Office at 1 McBride Ave Wonthaggi or by a phone or email request to that office. The EES Main Report and Technical Reports can also be viewed at the Project Information Office.

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