

Goulburn-Murray Water Connections Project — Expert Review Panel

17 July 2013

Adam Fennessy
Secretary
Department of Environment and Primary Industries
PO Box 500
East Melbourne VIC 3002

Dear Secretary of the Department of Environment and Primary Industries

ADVICE ON CONDITION 4 ASSESSMENT SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

The Expert Review Panel (ERP)¹ of the Goulburn-Murray Water Connections Project (GCP) (previously Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Project) has been charged with providing advice to the GCP, the Minister for Water, and the Secretary of the Department of Environment and Primary Industries in relation to the relevant conditions in the decision of the Minister for Planning that an Environmental Effects Statement (EES) is not required for the GCP.

The GCP adjunct works project is additional to the GCP works previously considered under the *Environment Effects Act 1978*. It involves works to upgrade irrigation delivery infrastructure in the Central Goulburn 1-4 channels (CG 1-4) and the Shepparton Irrigation Area (Shepparton IA) within the GMID. The adjunct works involve lining high-loss irrigation channels, modernisation of East Shepparton area within the Shepparton IA and implementing rationalised connections. The Minister for Planning decided that an EES is not required for the GCP adjunct works, as described in the referral accepted on 8 April 2011, subject to conditions, which are consistent with the conditions applied to the GCP. Condition 4 of this 2011 approval refers back to Condition 4 of the 2009 approval and states:

NVIRP must amend, or provide a supplementary report to the assessment report on ecological consequences of hydrological changes ("Condition 4 Report") provided on 23 February 2011 to the Secretary of DSE, considering the impacts potentially arising from these works. This assessment report is to be prepared to the satisfaction of Secretary, DSE, following written advice from the Expert Review Panel.

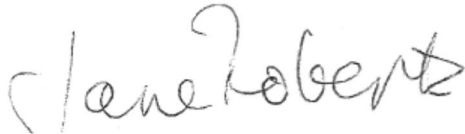
The original Condition 4 Report (SKM, 2011) was prepared for the GCP and approved by the Secretary DSE in April 2011.

¹ The ERP consists of Jane Roberts and Terry Hillman; independent consultants experienced in the relationships between hydrology and ecology, and in evaluating the ecological consequences of changing hydrology.

The Condition 4 Assessment – Supplementary Report (Supplementary Report), dated 1 May 2013, has indicated that the original Condition 4 Report (SKM 2011) assessed the potential impact of the total GCP (including CG 1-4 and Shepparton IA) on the ecosystems of Barmah Forest, Gunbower Forest and Hattah-Kulkyne Lakes. The Supplementary Report found that the likelihood of the total GCP adversely affecting these valued sites was negligible and, as CG 1-4 and Shepparton IA represent only a small component of the total modernisation program, their potential impact must also be rated as negligible. It is therefore the opinion of the ERP that the requirements of Condition 4 have been met and that no further assessment is required.

The ERP is pleased to have had the opportunity to provide this advice in the interests of progressing the environmentally responsible operation of the modernised irrigation system for which the GCP has responsibility.

Yours Sincerely,



JANE ROBERTS



TERRY HILLMAN

Copy To:

Minister for Water

Project Director G-MW Connections Project