

**SUBMISSION TO THE AVONBANK MINERAL SANDS PROJECT INQUIRY AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE
IN REGARDS TO THE AVONBANK MINERAL SANDS PROJECT ENVIRONMENT EFFECTS STATEMENT
(EES)**

1. Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity for Council to lodge a submission to the current exhibition of the Environmental Effects Statement (EES) for the proposed Avonbank Mineral Sands Project, being proposed by WIM Resource.

Council's interests in the Project are spread across many of the potential impact areas identified in the EES documents. Council has identified a range of issues that it believes can be adequately managed to enable the project to proceed. These issues are presented in this submission.

Given the significant economic benefits which will result from the Project, and its view that the issues can be adequately managed, Council supports progression of a carefully regulated mine project in which any potentially adverse environmental impacts are addressed via the relevant regulatory instruments.

Significant local procurement and employment benefits are expected to arise in the Horsham Rural City municipality, with further diversification of the economic base of the region also seen as a positive to support future social and economic wellbeing.

Overall, Council supports the progression of the Project subject to appropriate regulatory consideration/controls. Council believes the current EES process provides the appropriate assessment framework for this to occur.

While Council has formed a view that the EES documents present sufficient evidence that support that the Project should proceed, Council is also mindful of the significant disruption that the Project will cause to many of its residents in and near the mining area. Council is keen to understand from the EES process about the impacts the community perceives the Project will have on them. Council is committed to working with the community and WIM Resource to address these issues as the mine proceeds.

2. Summary

This section presents a summary of Council's key areas of interest in relation to the EES. Further information in support of these key points, and information on a range of additional points are presented in the Details section of this submission.

2.1. Radiation

Council obtained independent advice to help it form a view that the assessment of radiation impacts appears to be thorough and that the impacts of radiation on people and the environment are generally well below (within) accepted dose limits.

Having said that, Council is mindful that operations of the mine must strictly adhere to the framework established in the EES documents to ensure that this remains the case. In this regard, Council has identified the following areas where there is some uncertainty:

- Management of tailings returned to the mine pits. While initially moist, the tailings are intended to dry out prior to placement of overburden. As the material dries it has the potential to generate dust. This does not appear to have been taken into account in the calculations of dust and radiation exposure.
- A key assumption is that the HMC stockpiles remain moist, and that therefore the generation of dust, and the associated conveyance of radioactive material is negligible. The reports do not appear to assess the risk of the impacts of the stockpiles drying out nor sufficient measures to manage this risk.

These two issues are presented in further detail in the “Details” section of this submission.

Council seeks to be a stakeholder in the process to review the operational plans to manage radiation. It is assumed that all mitigation and control strategies identified in the EES documents will be included into the appropriate Radiation Plans.

2.2. Monitoring

Related to the above points regarding adherence to the operational framework established in the EES documents, Council seeks to understand how the various Government agencies will appropriately resource the monitoring of the mine’s operations for the life of the Avonbank Mineral Sands project. Council has a reservation that the lack of presence of some key agencies within the region will lead to a lower than optimum level of supervision by regulators, and a reliance solely on reporting by the mine operator.

Council seeks to be an ongoing stakeholder in a reference group (or similar) for review of compliance reporting of the Project to help ensure that the measures emanating from this EES process are effective in managing the impacts of the Project on the environment and our community.

2.3. Heavy Minerals Haulage – Road vs Rail

Council considers that the Project should utilise rail to haul the HMC to the Port of Portland. The consideration of the use of rail has not been sufficiently addressed in the EES documents, however Council acknowledges that it is not immediately possible for this to occur.

The Project should use rail transport, with a preference for daytime movements, once the Maroona to Portland rail line and associated Port of Portland infrastructure have been upgraded, to help reduce amenity and safety impacts associated with road transportation.

Council is committed to working with WIM Resource and other stakeholders to gain a commitment from the State and Federal Governments for the required upgrades.

Council also seeks a commitment from WIM Resource to provide rail infrastructure from its site to enable the use of rail as soon as this can be achieved.

The use of rail instead of road for this transport would address the following risks identified in the EES documents:

- Greenhouse gas production reduction
- Reduced amenity and noise risks through some urban areas, including Horsham, where this material is transported adjacent to the CBD area
- Freight efficiency, and reduced freight movement on roads, with associated road safety benefits.

2.4. Socio-Economic Impacts

The creation by this Project of additional jobs in the region is welcomed by Council. Associated with this will be a range of socio-economic impacts which, with good management, will help to enhance the vitality of the municipality. Key areas of concern relate to housing, childcare and early education, and workforce impacts.

Council recommends that a strategy that addresses issues associated with the workforce, childcare, education, health and housing, is developed prior to operations commencing.

2.5. Noise and Vibration

Council considers that the impact of noise and vibration has been understated in the reports, in particular in relation to the impact of night-time movement of the HMC trucks along the Henty Highway in populated areas. In particular, the EES documents do not account for those residential areas in Horsham which directly front the Henty Highway (excluding the section that is also part of the Western Highway which carries high levels of night-time traffic). In these areas, the additional transport associated with this project represents a significant increase in night-time traffic levels and health impacts. It is proposed that relatively simple treatments, such as slurry seals to improve the road surface, could mitigate this impact.

2.6. Land Use Planning

The proposed mining activity will have significant implications on land use and development in an around the Dooen and the Wimmera Intermodal Freight Precinct (WIFT). Council acknowledges that mining area will be managed through the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990 and other environmental legislation, and that the processing plant is proposed to be located outside this area and will be subject to the requirements of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 and the Horsham Scheme.

In consultation with Council and State Government Agencies the proponent has considered these complexities and seeks to include an incorporated document to provide a clear framework for approval and ongoing compliance. It should be noted that regulation of mining activity is not a core role of the Responsible Authority and ongoing compliance and enforcement presents some challenges for Horsham Rural City.

Council understands that it is normal practice for ore processing to form part of a Work Authority administered and regulated by Earth Resources Regulation and that for other major projects the Minister for Planning retains the role of Planning Authority and Responsible Authority.

It is unclear why the proponent is seeking to separate the processing plant from the mine area and Council seeks the Panel's consideration of the burden and impracticality the ongoing enforcement and compliance would have on Council.

To avoid uncertainty, Council proposes that the whole mine site, including the Processing Area should be included under the Work Authority under the provisions of the MRSD Act.

3. Detailed Discussion of Key Matters

3.1. Radiation

A key area of Council's concern about the Avonbank mine has been understanding the potential impacts associated with the mining of the radioactive materials present within the mineral sands. Council obtained specialist advice to assist in its understanding of this.

This advice has led Council to form the view that in most aspects, the information in the EES documents has:

- appropriately characterised the natural background radiation levels,
- used comprehensive and appropriate methodologies to estimate the maximum annual radiation dose to members of the public
- determined that the estimated radiation doses associated with the Project are well below relevant dose limits and are expected to fall within the normal range of variation in background radiation levels around Australia.

In practice, Council considers that the estimated methodology for determining radiation doses is quite conservative and the radiation doses estimated in the reports are highly unlikely to occur.

Specifically, Council understands from its independent advice that the radiation dose assessment has used extremely conservative assumptions.

Council notes that the EES does not include the RMP, RWMP or REP. These plans have not been presented as part of the EES process and understands that these operational plans must be developed and approved prior to commencement of operations.

Council is aware that these plans (or some aspects of these plans) are sometimes considered commercial-in-confidence and not publicly available. Council considers that this practice is not in the public interest, and that the plans should be made available to the maximum extent possible. Council is then keen to ensure that the mitigation strategies and controls outlined in the EES and radiation risk assessment are included in these plans to honour the commitments made in the EES.

Similarly, the monitoring and management of these materials as outlined in the operational RMP, RWMP or REP need to be reported through a stakeholder reference group (or similar) including Council.

3.1.1. Tailings Management

As indicated in the summary, Council is seeking clarity about the radiation and dust impacts emanating from the tailings.

When deposited back into the mine pits, the tailings are wet. They are then allowed to dry in the air prior to placement of overburden. The process for drying the tailings may take weeks to months. As the tailings become progressively drier, the potential for dust to be drawn from the tailings will increase.

It is not clear how has this been taken into account in the calculations of dust and radiation exposure (i.e. in either the Radiation or Air Quality sections), and it should be noted that the tailings will have radiation levels about 50% of the levels of the ore.

The Air Quality appendix, which is relevant in terms of generation of dust from various surfaces / stockpiles, includes assessment of the geological layers above the ore (/tailings), but seems to exclude consideration of the tailings. That is, there does not seem to be a reference for the

processes that would generate dust or mitigate dust from the tailings. It may be that the assumption is that the tailings returning to the void remain wet and will not generate dust, but that overlooks that this material will gradually dry out.

Understanding this process then leads to the conclusion that it is difficult to mitigate this dust generation in the drying phase, as the material is intended to dry out – hence the use of sprinklers, say, conflicts with the required objective in this phase.

Clarity is therefore required on the assumptions and calculations about dust generation, and associated radiation conveyance from the tailings.

3.1.2. HMC Stockpiles

A key assumption is that the HMC stockpiles remain moist, and that therefore the generation of dust, and the associated conveyance of radioactive material is negligible. E.g. p53 of Appendix I, Radiation, which cites 7% moisture:

- **100% of the dust resuspended to air is ore.** The reality is that the dust will be composed of a blend of overburden, tailings, and road dust, or any other material resuspended as a result of operations, all with activity concentrations considerably less than the ore itself. The fraction of dust attributed to the ore or HMC handling is 7-14% as reported by ERM for Y2, Y7 and Y22. The HMC product is coarse grained (greater than 40 µm), dense (SG above 3.8) and damp (~7% moisture), and unlikely to be resuspended.

The reports do not appear to assess the risk of the impacts of the stockpiles drying out nor sufficient measures to manage this risk. It is noted in various sections that reference is made to sprinklers, for example Chapter 13 – Air Quality, Section 13.6.2.4 states:

13.6.2.4 AQ-05: HMC stockpile management

Heavy Mineral Concentrate will be stockpiled wet when pumped from the concentrator plant. The HMC stockpile will retain moisture and will be loaded to the haulage trucks moist with around 4-6% water content.

In some circumstances during extreme conditions the surface may dry and be subject to some surface creep. Sprinklers will be established as a contingency to maintain moisture content across the stockpile and minimise surface creep. A sediment fence will be established around the stockpile area to prevent HMC surface creep outside the stockpile domain.

In this regard, Chapter 2- Project Description states:

The HMC stockpile will retain some moisture from the process, which will mitigate potential dust lift-off. A sprinkler system will be established to maintain moisture levels during warm, windy conditions and a stabiliser will be used if required to suppress dust.

While reference is made to sprinklers, there are conflicting descriptions between these references, e.g.:

- “during extreme conditions the surface may dry ...”
- “A sprinkler system will be established ... during warm windy conditions”.

Clarity and certainty is required around these operating conditions, including the use of stabilisers which is referenced in Chapter 2, but apparently not elsewhere. Further, Chapter 2 indicates, in section 2.2.3.7:

The HMC will be pumped from the WCP to the stockpile area, where it will pass through one of three dewatering cyclone stackers and will be stacked in a cone shape approximately 8 m high. Once a stockpile is full, it will be directed to the next cyclone stacker, and the previous stockpile will be left to drain to around 3–5% moisture before being transported to the Port. The process will involve one active stacker, one stockpile drying, and one stockpile being reclaimed for transport to the Port.

That is, the range of moisture content of the HMC differs again from other chapters.

Council submits that there is an unquantified contribution of dust and radioactive materials from the HMC stockpiles that will arise during warm to hot and windy conditions that arise quite frequently in Wimmera summers. While mitigation measures are proposed, the controls surrounding these seem quite imprecise, and there is a risk that these will not adequately mitigate the risk. The following additional information should be provided:

- Details of the arrangements that will be in place to monitor HMC moisture conditions, across the stockpile site.
- Details of the mitigation measures, e.g. how they will operate and assessment of their adequacy.
- A sensitivity analysis to review the potential for dust and radiation conveyance from the HMC stockpiles in the highly realistic situation that the mitigation measures are inadequate during warm – extreme conditions.

Further, consideration should be given to additional mitigation measures at the HMC stockpiles, including:

- Construction of a shed to house this material. It is understood that HMC is stored at the Port of Portland in a shed.
- The use of tarpaulins, as is done for grain bunkers.
- The use of a spray mulch, such as Posi-shell, which Council uses for daily cover on its Doon Landfill.

A greater level of certainty would be provided with these additional measures. This is of particular concern to Council as the HMC stockpiles are located adjacent to the WAL Hub, which is an area where food and hay processing is already occurring or is planned to occur. There is a high expectation that these industries will not be impacted by the mine operation.

3.2. Heavy Minerals Haulage – Road vs Rail

The Wimmera Intermodal Freight Terminal (WIFT) is central to the Avonbank mine and immediately adjacent to the Avonbank mine processing area. The WIFT links the region with Melbourne and Geelong and with some infrastructure upgrades could provide a highly efficient link with Portland, Victoria's only naturally deep-water port.

Council considers that the Project should utilise rail to haul the HMC to the Port of Portland.

Council was pleased to be involved in a short-term working group to examine the potential for the use of rail. It was identified that there are some significant limitations preventing the use of rail for hauling HMC to Portland at present, including:

- The lack of a bulk loading facility at WIFT
- The capacity / condition of the Maroona – Portland rail line
- Connecting rail facilities at the Port of Portland.

Council agrees that it is not immediately possible to haul the HMC to Portland via rail, however, there should be ongoing work to achieve this as soon as possible, to mitigate some of the risks identified in parts of the EES documents, and for the broader regional benefit.

Upgrading the Maroona-Portland rail line is a priority for Council and the Rail Freight Alliance (a group of many Councils from across Victoria), and some planning has occurred to develop a case to advocate to Governments that this should proceed.

The EES documents recognise that there are other proposals for mineral sands mines in the region. The compounding impacts of multiple projects relying on road transport for HMC haulage should be considered in determining the criticality of establishing a rail haulage route for Avonbank mine and the other mines that are likely to establish in the region in the very near future.

The Avonbank mine will generate very significant profits for its operator, and significant royalties for the State Government. Considering the compounding benefits, and returns, of the other mining projects, there is a compelling argument for the investment in the required facilities to enable rail haulage.

In addition, WIM Resource has made a strong commitment to reduction of greenhouse gases in its EES documents. This includes the development of a proposed Green Travel Plan in Chapter 9 – Traffic and Transport. Section 9.6.2.2 of that Chapter cites that

9.6.2.2 TM-03: Green Travel Plan

A Green Travel Plan (GTP) will be developed to promote sustainable transport initiatives and to minimise private vehicle use by project personnel (where appropriate). The GTP will be relevant to all phases of the Project, from construction through to decommissioning and will focus on Project related personnel activity to encourage carpooling and/or Project provided transit services where appropriate. The GTP will be prepared in consultation with HRCC and will include:

However, the discussion in the detailed appendix overlooks the significant greenhouse benefits that rail haulage of HMC could provide.

Upgrading the required infrastructure to use rail for HMC haulage will leave a lasting legacy in the region for ongoing benefits, and would provide a platform for future economic and jobs growth in Western Victoria.

Council submits that rail transport of HMC (with a preference for daytime movements) should be used exclusively for the Project as soon as the necessary infrastructure upgrades have been completed to help reduce amenity and safety impacts associated with road transportation.

Council is committed to working with WIM Resource and other stakeholders to gain a commitment from the State and Federal Governments for the required to upgrades the rail infrastructure to enable heavy materials to eventually be railed to the Port of Portland.

Council also seeks a commitment from WIM Resource to provide rail infrastructure from its Avonbank site to enable the use of rail as soon as this can be achieved

3.3. Socio-Economic Impacts

Housing and Accommodation - The EES includes an extensive Social Impact Assessment that includes a review of impact on housing for the construction and operational phases of the Mineral Sands Project. The report acknowledges Horsham's role as regional city, its current land and supply,

rental market and provides some indicative figures for workforce with approximately 200 during construction and 232 full-time for operations expected.

It is of some concern that the report relies on the assumption that 75 per cent of the construction and operation workforce will be attracted from the region and accordingly the impact on temporary accommodation and housing supply will be negligible. Whilst this may be WIM Resource's goal it does not represent the full impact of the project as jobs market adjusts to workers taken from other industries and the full impact on workforce and housing supply should be considered.

The market driven approach outlined in the report to rely on existing accommodation providers is based on data gathered in 2021 during the COVID pandemic and the prospect of turning over tourism and visitor accommodation to worker accommodation will have significant impact on Horsham's event and business visitation.

A more sophisticated strategy is required including partnerships with housing owners, construction camps and investment in long term housing supply.

Childcare - Consideration needs to be provided in regards to the current demand for childcare places in the Horsham municipality, as more than 215 individual children are on waiting the lists of the Long Day Care Centres (LDC) centres in Horsham. In late 2022 the By Five Wimmera Southern Mallee Early Years Initiative presented in a report titled Childcare in the Wimmera Southern Mallee Understanding the story that there was 300 on the waiting list in the region and that there was 11 of the 13 centres which had a waiting list. There are four LDC centres in Horsham which in total provide approximately 330 places. These are run by both not for profit and for profit organisations. There are also significant waiting times for family day care so this is not able to absorb or assist the current LDC demand.

Recent data released by the Mitchell Institute for Education and Health Policy at Victoria University (2022), shows that in Horsham there are approximately 3 children competing for each childcare place available. Waiting lists are slow to shift as availability is reliant on a child leaving their place- usually only once the child begins school. Additional impacts are felt by families with more than one child needing care as this usually means that the wait is even longer as it is more difficult to place multiple children on the same days.

In the past 12 months, the reported waiting times have shown no decrease. The current reported waiting list numbers are at an all-time high.

Any additional demand for child care expected as a result of a new mine will place additional demand on current facilities/service provision. Council is the process of bringing on an additional long day care provider at its children's hub in Horsham North which will provide an additional 92 places. This will assist in managing demand.

Workforce - It should be recognised the provision the workforce from the region will have significant implications for existing businesses and housing and the commitment to Workforce Accommodation Strategy task force is welcome. However, a clearer commitment to the provision of short term accommodation and investment is required to mitigate the social and economic impact of mining in the region.

Council recommends that a strategy that addresses issues associated with the workforce, childcare, education, health and housing, is developed prior to operations commencing.

3.4. Noise and Vibration

Council considers that the assessment of noise and vibration impacts understates the significance of this issue, and the potential impact on human health. There are a series of references in the technical appendices which combine to form this view, as follows:

- From Appendix G – Noise and Vibration
 - Section 5.2.2 Road Traffic Vibration. In urban areas, minor irregularities in the road surface will create noise and vibration. This is an issue for haul vehicles en route to Portland.
 - Section 5.3.5 Operational Road Traffic. Further to the previous point, the mine haulage traffic on the Henty Highway will be a significant proportion of night time traffic, i.e. when residents are trying to sleep. Based on the traffic data in section 6.3, the mine’s haulage trucks will lead to a significant increase in night time heavy vehicle traffic.
 - 10.1.4 Road Traffic Assessment. It is noted that the table of identified receptors does not include residences in urban Horsham, e.g. along Dooen Road. These residences are likely to be impacted by a similar level as Cavendish, which is noted as exceeding the RNP noise criteria threshold, by being displayed in bold font. This justifies the recommendation for treatment to address irregular surfaces of roads. In this regard, the discussion in section 10.1.4.1 is not considered adequate – the extra traffic level at night will mean that these above criteria noise impacts could be significant for adjacent residents.
 - 10.1.5 Sleep Disturbance Assessment. Re-presenting the findings of the report, there is potential for the project to generate traffic noise levels above 65 dBA, and the project will deliver an extra 2.25 heavy vehicles per hour.
- From Appendix M – Human Health
 - Section 1.2 - Sensitive Receptors. This section includes residents of Cavendish as sensitive receptors. Residents in the urban areas of Horsham fronting the freight route to the Port of Portland should be considered similarly.
 - Section 10.2.1 – Operational Road Traffic. This section again overlooks the residences in Horsham urban area along the Henty Highway route.
 - Discussion in section 10.3.1 – Road Traffic Noise, also relates, and identifies that there are issues that should be addressed. The numbers cited in on p131 of this Appendix significantly understate the impact on residential areas through Horsham, in the areas that are traversed only by the Henty Highway – that is, the sections that are also part of the Western Highway (e.g. Stawell Rd, McPherson St), are likely to have less significant impacts due to the large overnight truck numbers on the Western Highway. The increased numbers on p134 is similarly significantly understated.
 - The conclusions re this impact are not agreed, e.g. bottom paragraphs of p 136, as follows:

Based on the results shown in **Table 10.14** and **Table 10.15**, the incremental noise from the construction and operations of the Project has a negligible impact on the local community.

Based on the noise modelling used in the HHRA, there would be no increase in sleep disturbance or increase in cardiovascular disease due to the noise from the Project construction and operation.

In summary, there is a trail of evidence from within the EES documents that reasonably lead to the following conclusions:

- The HMC haulage will lead to a significant increase in night-time traffic in some areas, as the current traffic levels are low.
- There is evidence that this will disrupt sleep patterns, and impact on human health.

- Some residential areas of Horsham have been overlooked in the assessment.

It is agreed that the impact is not high, but it is proposed that some simple treatments could be put in place at a low, proportionate cost, to mitigate these risks, such as:

- An enhanced maintenance program to quickly respond to any pot holes or defects in the road surface in problem sections.
- Laying of a slurry seal or similar surface to reduce road noise, including those associated with bumps or unevenness in the surface.

WIM Resource should develop an upgrade and maintenance plan with DTP as part of its Traffic Management Plan for the Project, to address this issue.

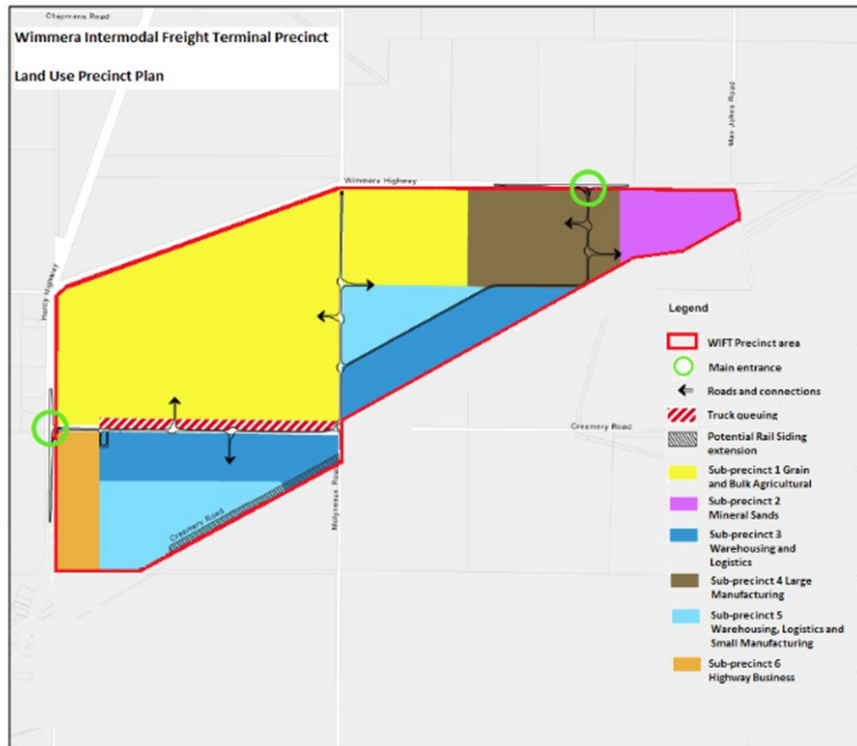
3.5. Land Use Planning

The proposed Avonbank Mineral Sands mining project has a number land-use planning implications for Horsham Planning Scheme including the proposed processing plant, infrastructure and mining area.

The proposed mine is substantially within the works area and will be managed by Work Authority in accordance with the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990 for which no planning permit is required under clause 52.09 Extractive Industry And Extractive Industry Interest Areas. The mining area will have significant implications for agriculture and transport that will need to be managed through the Works Authority and legislation outside the Planning and Environment Act.

Significantly the mineral sands processing plant is proposed within the WIFT precinct and would require a Planning Permit under the current Special Use Zone, Development Plan and Design Development Plan Overlay (<https://planning-schemes.app.planning.vic.gov.au/Horsham/ordinance/37.01-s9>)

The processing plant takes advantage of the WIFT precinct to provide integration with transport and logistics opportunities of the intermodal hub and the current planning controls provide strong support for mineral sands development with Sub-Precinct 2 set aside for this purpose.



As outlined in the EES a Special Control Overlay is proposed by the applicant to manage the future approval and compliance process for the plant and has requested a Planning Scheme Amendment to include an incorporated document.

This is an accepted mechanism for major projects across Victoria to allow for a direct approval process and clear understanding of the Responsibility Authorities and other agencies expectations.

The Incorporated document will require the submission of a range of plans including a development plan, environmental management plan and Noise and Vibration Management Plan that will require the Responsible Authority to approve.

The current incorporated document has been prepared in consultation with WIM Resource, DELWP (DEECA) and Council and is intended to capture the same information that would be required under a planning application.

The review of the EES and incorporated document has raised a number of issues that Council as the Responsibility Authority will seek clarity on, as follows:

1. The Mineral Sands processing plant extends beyond the current precinct boundary for the purposes of buffer and ancillary infrastructure and clear guidance on the type of activity and process for future expansion should be considered.
2. Limited detail on the environmental management plan has been provided on the reporting and compliance processes given the limited resources of Council an independent process for auditing and reporting is requested
3. The wording and structure of the incorporated document has not been through a formal authorisation or strategic planning review and any EES approval should be subject to a final review.

The proposed mining activity will have significant implications on land use and development in an around the Dooen and the Wimmera Intermodal Freight Precinct (WIFT). Council acknowledges that mining area will be managed through the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990 and other environmental legislation, and that the processing plant is proposed to be located outside this area and will be subject to the requirements of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 and the Horsham Scheme.

In consultation with Council and State Government Agencies the proponent has considered these complexities and seeks to include an incorporated document to provide a clear framework for approval and ongoing compliance. It should be noted that regulation of mining activity is not a core role of the Responsible Authority and ongoing compliance and enforcement presents some challenges for Horsham Rural City.

Council understands that it is normal practice for ore processing to form part of a Work Authority administered and regulated by Earth Resources Regulation and that for other major projects the Minister for Planning retains the role of Planning Authority and Responsible Authority.

It is unclear why the proponent is seeking to separate the processing plant from the mine area and Council seeks the Panel's consideration of the burden and impracticality the ongoing enforcement and compliance would have on Council.

To avoid uncertainty, Council proposes that the whole mine site, including the Processing Area should be included under the Work Authority under the provisions of the MRSD Act.

3.6. Detailed Chapter and Appendix Comments

The balance of this section presents other specific comments about various sections of the EES documents.

Chapter 2 – Project Description

Figure 2.6, on p2-9, and elsewhere in other documents, shows part of the Wimmera Highway east of the main project area, and a section of the Drung Jung Road as being part of the project area. What is the intended use of these areas for the project?

Section 2.3.2 Site Access and Project Traffic. The intersection at the Wimmera Highway should include an acceleration lane.

Chapter 3 – Project Alternatives

Section 3.3.9 - HMC Transport. Refer to Council's earlier comments about the transport of this material to Portland by rail.

It is noted that Table 3-9 in this section recognises that "both road and rail options are likely to result in noise effects on some residents." This statement seems to be at odds with statements in the appendices which seem to minimise the impact of this issue, but support this submission's arguments that the movements, especially at night, will impact residents on the haulage route.

Chapter 4 – Regulatory Framework

Section 4.15.5 – Road Management Act 2004. Council is not responsible for any State roads. Council has a maintenance contract with DTP for some State roads, under which it performs some maintenance activities, under direction. There is a Code of Practice under which Council has responsibility for some components of some State roads in defined areas, typically roadside sections in urban areas.

Chapter 5 – Community Engagement

General – the community engagement undertaken by WIM Resource has appeared to Council to have been extensive and intensive over several years. There has been ample opportunity for the community and stakeholders to be aware of and participate in WIM Resource’s engagement activities.

Chapter 7 – Regional Setting

Section 7.2.7 - Government Areas and Services. Horsham Aerodrome hosts an Aeromedical Transfer Station for Ambulance Victoria, not the RFDS.

Chapter 8 – Land Use and Planning

Section 8.4.3 – Land Use Setting. Reference to the railway line as the “Stawell – Horsham” line understates its significance – it is a section of the “Melbourne to Adelaide” interstate line. (Also referenced on related diagrams in this Chapter).

Chapter 9 – Traffic and Transport

Section 9.4.8 – Rail Level Crossings. This section lists the Molyneaux Rd crossing but does not identify that it is not to be used for project traffic.

Section 9.6.2.2 – Green Travel Plan. The use of rail to haul HMC to Portland is considered highly relevant to reduce greenhouse gases.

Section 9.6.2.4 – TM-05 Road Infrastructure Improvements. The proposed intersection should have an acceleration lane in addition to the proposed treatments.

Chapter 20 – Socio-Economics

Section 20.4.1.2 Population data for HRCC as noted in the report is incorrect, it states the city of Horsham rather than the municipality.

Section 20.4.3.2 and 20.7.3.2: There is limited capacity for growth within the public secondary school system with more than 1000 students at Horsham College. There is also a significant waiting list for childcare in Horsham (over 200) and Horsham is experiencing small population growth increasing overall service demand. The population is ageing and there are additional demands on the service system including hospitals and aged care.

Section 20.7.4.2: Council does not support the comment that there is substantial amount of unused capacity within the region’s temporary accommodation market.

Appendix B - Land use and planning

Section 3.5.5. Proposes a water pipeline within road reserves. This is contrary to the normal Wimmera Mallee Pipeline works – due to the impact on native vegetation. Should the pipes be located in the adjoining private land that has generally been cultivated?

Section 3.6. Decommissioning. The power line upgrade to the precinct could be advantageous for subsequent development in the WAL Hub precinct. It should be noted that the potential exists for some of the plant and equipment to be impacted by radioactive minerals – consideration of this will be required in the decommissioning phase.

Section 3.7.2. Note reference to the WIFT Precinct in this section. This is now known as the WAL Hub, though acknowledged that the Planning Scheme typically refers to the WIFT precinct still in this sense. Wimmera Container Line is part of SCT.

Section 4.5. Note that there will be a requirement for preparation of further plans subject to the approval of the responsible authority, including traffic and other aspects. Council will be a critical stakeholder in the development of these detailed plans.

Appendix C – Road Traffic Assessment

P10 – Impact Table. IP-06 discusses potential for local road temporary closures. These will need to be planned and negotiated with Council and other stakeholders, including local landholders.

Section 3.2 Project Description. Figure 3.2, being the plan of the project area, includes some “stubs” of roads that stand out from the main mass of the project area. These include:

- A closed section of the former Creamery Rd
- A closed section of the former Molyneaux Rd alignment (that runs south from the railway intersection).
- A section of Drung Jung Rd.

The purpose of these being in the project area is not clear.

Section 3.3.1 Project Area Local Access Requirements. This section references use of some local roads. It is assumed that these will be addressed in a Traffic Management Plan subject to subsequent approval prior to use.

Section 3.3.2 Local Public Road Access. Note the reference to traffic and access management plans in this section. This process is agreed. Council will need to approve these plans, rather than just be consulted, as per the language in this section. While Council will endeavour to support the proposed road closures, it cannot be assumed at this stage that they will be able to be approved.

The fifth dash point near the bottom of p19 in this section is critical, re the unavailability of the railway level crossing on Molyneaux Rd. This point is worded suitably, although it was not specifically included in Chapter 9 (refer comment above).

Section 3.4 Road Transport Elements. P25, third dash point, “Movements may rely on Wimmera Highway and other local roads at times”. Local roads may need to be upgraded to suit, at WIM Resource’s expense.

Section 3.5 Proposed Transport Infrastructure. First paragraph proposes CHR and BAL turning lanes. The BAL (Basic Left) turn lane should be replaced with a CHL – Channelised Left turning lane. There should also be provision for acceleration lanes for vehicles coming out from the new access road.

Section 8.1.2 Henty Highway. This section makes reference to a timed 40 km/h speed limit near Carroll St, which is incorrect. The 40 km/h timed speed limit school zone on McPherson St near Smith St / Roberts Ave is not made in the report.

Section 8.1.3 Western Highway. Near top of p45. “A posted speed limit of 100 km/h typically applies, reducing to 60 km/h in townships.” Add to this, “and sections of 50 km/h for example in the centre of Beaufort and Ararat townships, and in Horsham along the Baillie St section.”.

8.2 Key Intersections. The intersection of O’Callaghans Parade and the Western Highway should be noted as a key intersection. From this channelised intersection, the HMC trucks will need to get from the left lane into the right lane to head to Hamilton. This will often be in conflict with vehicles from O’Callaghans Parade many of which are aiming to get into the left lane to turn left into Williams Rd.

8.3 Project Area Local Roads. It should be noted that many of the local roads listed in this section are not only unsealed, but are also dry weather only roads, formed in the local soil.

8.9 Rail Level Crossings. Further mention is made of Molyneaux Rd crossing. It is required that this only be used for local traffic. It is not suitable for project traffic without upgrading to being signalised, and approval from VicTrack and/or DTP.

10.3 Mitigation measures. Agree with the development of TMPs as a suitable mitigation measure. Council is more than just a stakeholder in the development of these, but must be the approver of TMPs that relate to its roads.

The same approval will be required from both road authorities for operational and decommissioning stage TMPs.

11.1.3.1 Traffic Generation, Establishment Phase. Concrete deliveries will originate on local roads within the Horsham urban area. The suitability of these roads should also be confirmed.

11.3.4 Project Area Local Roads. The TMPs developed will be subject to approval by Council. Council will seek to ensure that impacts on local residents are appropriately taken into consideration, including engagement with those residents (including farming operations) – this engagement is to be undertaken by WIM Resource. The discussion in this section refers to “inform the community” – the engagement will need to be at the “consult” level, not just “inform”.

Provision for a bond to ensure appropriate road reinstatement is noted (top of p98).

11.3.6.2 Rail level crossings – Local Road Network. Acknowledge again that Molyneaux Rd level crossing will not be used by the project, and this will be stated in relevant TMPs.

Appendix D – Historic Cultural Heritage

Section 4.2.4, p19. Reference to “Goulburn Murray Water website” should be “GWMWater website”.

Section 4.3.3.4, p23. The foundations including end walls of Dooen Weir are partly intact and remain in place.

Appendix E – Cultural Heritage

Noted that a CHMP has been done, and that no cultural heritage places identified.

Appendix F – Landscape and Visual

Section 3.7 Stakeholder Engagement. Third dot point. The comment related to need for setbacks of tree screening near the Wimmera / Henty Highway intersection is noted, and is an important consideration.

Section 4.3.1. The screening vegetation shown in the diagram on P xiv appears too close to the road. There should be adequate setback so that visibility onto the Wimmera Highway is not obstructed for traffic entering the highway.

Section 4.7 Construction Village. Other reports indicate that this is not now proposed.

Section 8.2.3 Landscape Screening. The layout of the tree screen identified as LS2 on Figure 8-1 appears to include planting right up to the intersection of the Wimmera and Henty Highways. This is in contradiction to the comment from section 3.7, as per above. A significant setback of these trees is required at the intersection of the highways, as vehicles approaching the intersection from the north on Henty Highway, and from the east on the Wimmera Highway, do so at close to the speed limit, as it is a merging intersection. Hence, there is a need for an increased sight distance. The photo-montage shown as Figure 8-2 is also in contradiction of the comment from section 3.7. A setback of some 300-

400 m is recommended for screening at this intersection. This photo-montage is repeated as Figure 9-9, again without appropriate setback.

Section 9 – Visual Impact Assessment. Page xvii states the “Wimmera Highway runs between Ballarat to the east ...”. The Wimmera Highway runs from near Bendigo, or you might say St Arnaud, but not Ballarat.

Appendix G – Noise and Vibration

Section 9.2.3 Road Traffic Noise –the commitment to good practice and measures outlined in 10.1.4 and 10.1.5 is noted, these include not using engine brakes.

Appendix H – Air Quality

Section 3.1 EES Scoping Requirements. In several points in the table in this section, references to radiation impacts are identified as being addressed in the separate appendix on radiation. Is there a clear connection between the airborne dust assessment in this report and the radiation report?

Section 7.1.2 Step 2: Assessing Risks. There appears to be an inconsistency, to a degree, in the logic regarding sealed/unsealed roads in this section and the following section. The paragraph at the bottom of p77 indicates that:

- The roads near the HMC stockpiles could not be sealed for geotechnical reasons
- The change in dust emissions as a result was less than 1%.

Then, on p80, in section 7.1.3 the following is stated:

“It is clear that wheel-generated dust from vehicles travelling on unsealed roads is the main source of on-site dust and so controls targeted at this source will have the most effect on lowering the residual risk.”

The related issues (gaps) are:

- The subsequent discussion in Section 7.1.2 does not seem to take into account the higher potential risk of material near the HMC, owing to its greater concentration of radiation.
- The principle of aiming to avoid risks, in this case dust generation, where possible.

It is not apparent why the road cannot be sealed in this area, or why at least some other risk reduction couldn't be pursued. This should be explained further or reviewed.

Section 9.1 – Identification of mitigation measures. How will these measures be monitored to ensure they are being done? With reference to Table 9-1:

- It is stated that it is not practical to spray water on trucks as they are tipping overburden to stockpiles. Water could be directed onto the stockpiles where the dumping is occurring.
- Hauling on unsealed roads. States that “Not required if unsealed roads are watered as per AQMP”. The natural surface in the mine area is likely to be untrafficable if wet. I note section 9.1.2.2 re road surface material. These measures will need to be in place.
- Regarding seal the road. Refer commentary above.
- Anecdotal experience from other mines suggests that the inability to adhere to all mitigating measures, in particular on days of challenging weather conditions, can significantly impact on the achievement of required standards.

Council notes that the WIM Base Area is in the footprint of higher expected dust deposition, in particular in the earlier years. Will the WIM Resource personnel be drinking rainwater collected from the roof of the office buildings at this site?

Appendix I - Radiation

Section 7.1 Terrestrial radiation. The reference to the pilot plant area as being on Creamery Road is not the current name of that road. It is now known as Molyneaux Road (since c 2011).

Section 11.5 Consumption of Pipeline Water Supply. Water supply in the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline is not treated to potable ADWG standards, and is not typically used for drinking. Instead, water tanks are the principal source of water for drinking in rural areas of relevance to the EES.

There is no apparent consideration of decommissioning of plant that may be impacted by radiation.

Appendix J – Soils and Landform

Executive Summary – ES1.4 – reference to “Bookrunning” formation – should be “Bookpurnong”

Section 6.8 Contaminated sites. It is noted that the site listed as “Corner of West and Centre Roads” is part of the Longerenong College site, being the CFA training facility. This is not to be confused with West and Centre Roads, Riverside. Please add “Longerenong” to this address.

Section 8.1.1 MM01 Pit Dewatering Procedure. This section describes that dewatering of the pit will be 1.5 m above the height of the Geera Clay formation to avoid the risk of acidification. Is the level of the Geera Clay well enough understood so that dewatering in a current pit is not going to have an impact on adjacent areas of the Geera Clay that may be at a higher level? (Also relates to section 9.5).

Section 9.4.2 Differential settlement. Is there the potential for differential settlement to occur in a manner that alters drainage lines? How will this be managed?

Appendix K – Surface Water Impact Assessment

Section 5.3. Natural Watercourses and Wetlands. The discussion of Designated Waterways has the wrong definitions. The definition given refers to a “waterway” being the S3 of the Water Act 1989 definition, where the discussion of a “designated waterway” relates to the S188 definition, being a specific waterway where a permit for works is required.

Section 7.3.1 Overview. This section states “Any rainfall excess that becomes runoff with the RL drains to these channels or flows south westerly towards the Wimmera River or Dooen Swamp.” There would be negligible transport of water along the former channels, as, where not fully decommissioned they are nearly so and generally of such a flat grade that they do not form a continuous segment for long before some other barrier, e.g. a table drain, would become the drainage route.

Section 9.3.3 Rehabilitated Drainage. Will the drainage from the rehabilitated landscape take into account the potential for differential settlement of the land, which may impact on drainage patterns?

Section 9.3.6 Surface Water Management Plan. Council considers that it should be nominated as one of the stakeholders that this plan will be referred to.

Section 10.4.2.3 Volume. The following statement is made “However, the proportion of water contributed from the project area increases to approximately 6% during dry years.” It would be expected in dry years that there would be no material runoff from this area, and any impact would be negligible or nil. This is likely to be a limitation of the modelling in dry conditions.

Appendix L - Groundwater

Executive summary. (Similar references appear elsewhere). The report indicates (page ii) “The environmental values considered in the groundwater impact assessment include possible groundwater users (stock and domestic bores) and groundwater receiving environments” It should be noted that there is likely to be no use of groundwater in the vicinity of the mine for domestic and stock use, due to the poor quality of the groundwater and the availability of a higher quality supply from the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline. It is acknowledged that there is a requirement to report against the beneficial use category, but this comment provides relevant context.

Section 4.5. Figure 4.5 identifies a number of channels of the former stock and domestic supply system, including some that were also used as part of the smaller irrigation network. Nearly all of those have been decommissioned. The only obvious exception being the Taylors Lake channel from the reservoir to the Wimmera River.

Section 5.4 Operational Water Balance. The first para of this section indicates that “The salinity of water from the pipeline is approximately 65 mg/L TDS”. This is the case when water is sourced directly from Lake Bellfield. Has the assessment taken into consideration the potential for this water being sourced from alternative sources via Taylors Lake during extended droughts when Bellfield is lower, during which the salinity might be much higher, potentially 300-500 mg/L or even higher?

Appendix N – Economic Impact Assessment

Council’s assessment of the economic evaluation of the project is that the broader regional benefits of the project may be over-stated, although not to a significant extent. This is because the following factors may not have been adequately considered in the analysis presented in the EES:

- Externalities, such as the cost of road accidents, carbon emissions or impacts on housing prices.
- The ratio of workers from within the region may be over-stated.
- The economic multipliers used may not be accurate, for example due to lack of consideration of supply-side constraints, or budget constraints e.g. of government or households. The use of national-level multipliers is not necessarily appropriate to the regional scale.

Council has not quantified the likely variation of the economic benefits of the project, and while considering that they may not be as high as indicated in the EES documents they do not significantly differ from those.

Executive Summary - Legacies – p viii. It is difficult to consider rehabilitated farmland as a positive legacy, instead this is a basic minimum, and there is some uncertainty about whether this will be achieved at all sites. It is unclear that there will be improved residual infrastructure as a result of the project, there has not yet been a clear commitment to upgrade roads.

Section 6 – Policy Context. EIS Legislative context – p 45. There are further relevant acts, including EP Act and Water Act. No doubt more. (Refer Chapter 4, Regulatory Framework).

Section 7.5 – Government income. This section does not include the impact on Council rate revenue while parcels of land are used for mining, during which an exemption from Council rates applies. This will lead to an increase in rates borne by the broader community during this period.

Section 11.1 – Labour Market Impacts. It is most likely that the mine will draw on personnel currently engaged in a range of businesses, including local government, utilities and more. With the existing low level of unemployment, and limited availability of skilled staff in a range of disciplines, this will present challenges to the local labour market. This will be further impacted by the potential for the mine to offer much higher salaries than available in other industries. A targeted approach should be

considered for fostering improved availability of skilled labour resources for the mine and existing businesses.

Appendix O – Social Impact Assessment

Executive Summary, p3. The comment is noted that “The road network has been designed to direct traffic around the commercial core of Horsham, Hamilton, Branxholme and Heywood, and in the larger settlements, residences are separated from the haulage route by service roads.” This separation is absent for residences throughout Horsham except for the Stawell Road segment, i.e. residences directly about the haulage route through much of the Horsham section. This incorrect wording is repeated in section 5.4.4. Also in section 7.2.3 – see comments below

Executive Summary, p4. It is almost inevitable that there will be a significant delay between demand for new housing and its availability in the current market.

Section 2.2.1 – State and Regional Plans and Policies. Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Growth Plan 2014. This plan is now somewhat dated, and the comments made regarding housing are not reflective of the current market, i.e. “low rates of housing stress and high levels of housing affordability” are not current.

Section 7.2.3 – Impacts – Access and Amenity. Other locations along the haulage route, p54. An incorrect statement is made as follows “For example, in larger settlements such as Horsham and Heywood, dwellings are set back from the Henty Highway and separated from the road by service lanes.” This is not the case in most of the Horsham residential area fronting the Henty Highway route. Refer to my earlier comments re noise and vibration. Some mitigation should be made to reduce the risk and impact of noise within these residential areas, owing to the significant increase in night-time traffic through these areas. This comment also applies to the summary findings in Table 7.2.

Appendix P – Flora and Fauna Impact Assessment

It is noted that generally flora and fauna impacts are assessed as being low.

For areas where native vegetation is removed, is it planned to separately stockpile the topsoil in these areas so that they may be reinstated (even elsewhere), with the intent of partial re-establishment of the vegetation based on the seed resources within the stockpiles?

Appendix Q – Waste and Emissions Impact

Section 5.1 – Activities and potential wastes. Table 7. Concrete asphalt and related products are suitable for reuse. Council would be willing to discuss arrangements to facilitate reuse of this material. The volumes of putrescible waste cited are likely to be easily received at Doon Landfill.

Section 5.1.2.8 – Rehabilitation and decommissioning. Does the potential exist for some of the processing plant to be contaminated by radiation?

Greenhouse Gases. The potential to reduce GHG emissions by haulage of the HMC to Portland by rail should be considered in this report.

Attachment 1 – Stakeholder Engagement Report

Page 23, table. Comment about noise and vibration impacts through Horsham relevant to this section, i.e. disagree with the comment that there won't be any increase in sleep disturbance, as per earlier comments.

Attachment 2 – Draft Planning Scheme Amendment

The Flora and Fauna section seems to be a significant over-simplification. Is there roadside vegetation that is planned to be removed? Other sections also seem to be a bit too generalised / simplified.

Attachment 3 – Rehabilitation Plan

Section 9.1 / 9.2. Rehabilitation should consider preserving separate stockpiles of soils from areas of native vegetation for separate rehabilitation, with the potential for re-establishment of native species from the seed bank. Also relates to section 9.7 – using soil stockpiled from the road reserve in this case.

Attachment 5 – Aspects and Risks

The report discusses monitoring and external reporting. Who will the results of monitoring be reported to? Council will be an interested stakeholder in all such reporting

Chapter 26 – Summary and Conclusions

The Summary was found to be generally accurate and describes reasonably our review of the Technical Appendices and the Chapters. By nature, the Summary presents a generalisation or simplification of the details found in the Appendices, and omits many of the finer points of detail referenced in our comments above.

The issue of noise and vibration impacts is mentioned for Cavendish and Dooen. Given this finer level of detail in that respect, it is relevant to again mention these impacts for the Henty Highway through Horsham's residential areas. These impacts can be managed. Similarly, the related conclusion in 4.6.11 of the summary is not agreed with, i.e. the conclusion that there are negligible human health impacts is not supported, as per the comments above.

The impacts on the housing and labour markets are under-stated, and will require further and ongoing work, but these are also considered to be manageable.

Concluding Remarks

Overall, Council does not believe there are any impacts of the project that cannot be managed. A commitment to address the issues raised in this submission should be provided by WIM Resource.

Council also requests that all environmental issues raised by relevant authorities and community members be carefully assessed and appropriately mitigated by the proponent should the State Government approve the Project, including impacts on the community's health and wellbeing for the life of the project.

It is noted that the current EES process provides the appropriate assessment framework for this to occur.

Council requests to present to the Panel in relation to this submission.