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Dinuka McKenzie  
Senior Environmental Planner Energy and Water  
Major Infrastructure Assessments  
Department of Planning  
GPO Box 39  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Our Ref: LVPL031  
Your Ref: So6/00901

Dear Ms McKenzie

**Re: Proposed Queensland – Hunter Gas Pipeline  
Major Project Application No. 06\_0286**

Thank you for your letter regarding the proposed Queensland – Hunter Gas Pipeline. The CMA has reviewed the Environmental Assessment (EA) documentation and provides the following comments. The pipeline proposed runs through the Hunter Central Rivers CMA and as such our comments relate to the part of the pipeline that runs from the Upper Hunter LGA to Newcastle LGA (kilometre point (KP) 536 to 825).

- The proposal passes through a diverse range of vegetation and habitat types containing extensive areas of native vegetation including 22 EECs (in total) and threatened species. Much of the right of way (ROW) is zoned Rural 1(a) and as such the Native Vegetation (NV) Act would normally apply to the proposal site. The NV Act, regulates clearing of native vegetation and is administered by the CMA. The CMA understands that the NV Act does not apply to this project as it is being assessed under Part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. The CMA would request however that the objects of the NV Act be applied to the development, in particular the 'improve or maintain' principle should be adopted as part of the assessment of the proposal.
- The CMA strongly supports the following statements in the EA:
  - 'The development of the pipeline route was underpinned by principles of ecologically sustainable development (ESD).' '... the design philosophy of avoiding areas of high biodiversity.... and a preference for running the pipeline through already disturbed areas.' (page iv)
  - '... avoiding interactions with environmentally and culturally sensitive areas' '... a preference for the QHGP to go through disturbed (private agricultural) lands and avoid Travelling Stock Reserves (TSRs).' (page v)
  - '... utilising areas of cleared or degraded lands wherever possible as a means of reducing the impacts to biodiversity.' (page viii)
  - 'The philosophy of avoidance is central for ongoing environmental management, .... (page xii)
  - '... conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity.' (page 3-1)
  - 'Avoiding wetlands' one of the recommended objectives for route selection (page 3-3)
  - '... avoiding where possible local constraints such as: Vegetated areas.' (page 3-9)

- ‘...with a philosophy of impact avoidance on ecological value of high significance,...’ (page 9-1)
- 4.3.17 Newcastle area. The ‘Kooragang Nature Reserve’ has now been incorporated into the Hunter Wetlands National Park. The EA should refer to the ‘Hunter Wetlands National Park’ and also the ‘Kooragang Wetland Rehabilitation Project’. The EA should also define who is meant by the ‘Kooragang Island conservation officers’ and the agency that they are employed by. The construction of the pipeline through Kooragang Island (KP 816- 825) will have significant challenges due to the significant constraints of the land including: acid sulphate soils, high water table, flooding, access etc. The CMA suggests that the proponent consider the ‘Hunter Water Corporation’s Tomago Trunkmain Upgrade EA Revision 3’ prepared in February 2008 by GHD and even to observe the construction, proposed for April 2009. This area should be included in the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). The CMA would like to be consulted along with the other agencies listed on page 5-24 during the development of the CEMP.
- The CMA supports the principle of ‘no net loss of biodiversity values’ mentioned on page vii. The EA states that ‘The requirement for an offset strategy will be determined in consultation with DECC and other relevant agencies.’ (page vii) The CMA considers itself as a relevant agency and should be consulted on this issue.
- 9.6 Offset strategy for residual impacts (page 9-18). The CMA supports a biodiversity offset strategy and notes that the NV Act provides for offsets where clearing of native vegetation is unavoidable. Offsets to compensate for the clearing of vegetation are on a ‘like for like or better’ basis. That means that a particular vegetation community must be offset by the same vegetation community of the same or better condition and managed to improve its condition. The CMA does not support the use of new areas of revegetation as offsets (Table 9.6) as they do not meet the like for like principle.
- The ROW appears to go through several riverworks asset sites (4.3.13), where previous rehabilitation works have been undertaken by the CMA and former agencies in the Aberdeen and Muscle Creek areas. The proponent should contact the Muswellbrook CMA office to determine the exact location of these works prior to construction. These sites may be included in the CEMP where specific requirements for these sites could be detailed.

The CMA would also expect the proponent to consider the Catchment Action Plan (CAP), in particular the Guiding Principle section of the document and how the principles apply to this development. The CAP is available at [www.hcr.cma.nsw.gov.au/catchmentactionplan\\_download.php3](http://www.hcr.cma.nsw.gov.au/catchmentactionplan_download.php3)

The CMA has reviewed the ROW proposed and has made specific comments in Attachment 1. If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact David Green, the CMA’s Regional Catchment Coordinator on 4337 1207.

Yours faithfully

Dean Chapman  
Program Manager  
for Glenn Evans  
**General Manager**  
24 October 2008