

Notice of Decision – Snowy 2.0 Exploratory Works

Section 2.22 and clause 20 of Schedule 1 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*

Application type	Modification Request – Critical State Significant Infrastructure Approval
Application number and project name	Snowy 2.0 Exploratory Works - Modification 2 (SSI 9208 MOD 2)
Applicant	Snowy Hydro Limited
Approving authority	Minister for Planning and Public Spaces

Decision

Under section 5.25 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*, the Executive Director, Special Projects has modified the Snowy 2.0 Exploratory Works approval with conditions.

The modification request included changes to the layout of the approved exploratory works for the Snowy 2.0 Project, the introduction of a tunnel boring machine to complete the exploratory tunnel and changes to the infrastructure required to support these works.

A copy of the instrument of modification is available at:
<https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/project/25741>.

A copy of the Planning Secretary's Assessment Report is available at:
<https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/project/25741>

Date of decision

27 March 2020

Reasons for decision

The following matters were taken into consideration in making this decision:

- the previous assessments undertaken of the impacts of the Exploratory Works;
- the existing conditions of approval;
- the Modification Report for the modification request;
- issues raised in submissions;
- Snowy Hydro's Submissions Report;
- advice from key government agencies, including the National Parks and Wildlife Service;
- relevant NSW legislation, policies and guidelines; and
- the findings and recommendations of the Department's assessment report.

The key reasons for modifying the approval were:

- the proposed modifications offered several benefits, including:
 - reducing the scale of the exploratory works by shortening the length of the exploratory tunnel;
 - speeding up the completion of the exploratory works by using a tunnel boring machine;
 - reducing the traffic impacts of the exploratory works on Talbingo and sections of the Snowy Mountains Highway; and
 - reducing the impacts of the exploratory works on the Talbingo Reservoir by removing approved barge infrastructure and substantially reducing the dredging required and the number of vessels that would use the reservoir;
 - moving them closer to the Lobs Hole construction site and use a tunnel boring machine, speed up the
- with the implementation of suitable conditions, the proposed modifications can be carried out without causing any significant impacts;
- the conditions include:
 - paying the National Parks and Wildlife Service \$304,990 to offset the biodiversity impacts;
 - carrying out minor upgrades to the road network, including two roundabouts in the Cooma town centre to support the delivery of the tunnel boring machine to the site;
 - revisions to the approved management plans for the exploratory works to accommodate the changes; and
- on balance, the project is in the public interest.

Attachment 1 – Consideration of Community Views

During the assessment of the modification request, the Department consulted with the community, including the Snowy Monaro Regional Council. This engagement included:

- making all information associated with the modification request publicly available on the Department’s website;
- exhibiting the Modification Report from 6- 21 November 2019;
- requiring Snowy Hydro to provide a formal response to the issues raised in submissions;
- inspecting the site and surrounds;
- working closely with the relevant government agencies, including the National Parks and Wildlife Service, to consider and address key issues raised by the community.

During the exhibition, the Department received 27 submissions on the modification request, including 6 from government agencies, 2 from special interest groups and 19 from the general public. Only 7 of these submissions object to the modification request, however 16 of the submissions were strongly opposed to Snowy Hydro’s proposal to remove the condition in the exploratory works approval requiring a new recreational area to be established at the Talbingo Reservoir.

The table includes a summary of how the key issues raised by the community were taken into consideration.

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Consideration</i>
<p>Talbingo Recreational Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • removal of the existing obligation requiring Snowy Hydro to establish a new recreational area • importance of the recreational area to both the local and regional community 	<p>Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snowy Hydro has been proposing to close the Talbingo Spillway to the public for safety reasons, regardless of whether the Snowy 2.0 Project goes ahead or not. • Due to the direct impacts of the Exploratory Works on Talbingo Spillway the existing conditions of approval require Snowy Hydro to establish a new recreational area next to the Talbingo boat ramp. • Snowy Hydro is now proposing to remove all the approved barge infrastructure at Talbingo and the impacts on the Exploratory Works on the Talbingo Spillway are likely to be minimal, and there is no reason why it couldn’t be used for public recreation (apart from Snowy Hydro’s safety concerns). • Snowy Valleys Council has since secured \$1.35 million from Snowy Hydro and the NSW Government to develop an alternative recreational area adjacent to the Talbingo boat ramp. <p>Conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snowy Hydro may only use the Talbingo Boat Ramp, O’Hares Camp Ground Boat Ramp and/or Middle Bay Barge Ramp to launch and remove vessels associated with the development to and from Talbingo Reservoir; • Snowy Hydro must minimise any disruption to other boat ramp users when it is using the Talbingo Boat Ramp; and • Snowy Hydro keep the local community informed about any use and/or temporary closure of the Talbingo Boat Ramp.
<p>Traffic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shift away from maximising the use of barges to transport heavy equipment and materials into the KNP by road • significant increases to the number of heavy vehicles travelling through the KNP 	<p>Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost all the material and plant for the Exploratory Works is likely to come through Cooma now and the designated heavy vehicle route for the project (Snowy Mountains Highway/Link Road/Lobs Hole Ravine Road) provides the quickest and safest route to the site. • The removal of the Talbingo barge infrastructure would reduce the traffic impacts of the project on Talbingo and the Snowy Mountains Highway to the west of Link Road, and also reduce the double or triple handling of heavy materials and equipment for the Exploratory Works. • The increase in traffic along Lobs Hole Ravine Road is unlikely to have any significant impacts on the general public due to the closure of this part of the KNP, or any threatened species given the

	<p>mitigation measures that must be implement under the approved Biodiversity Management Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobs Hole Ravine Road – North can provide a better emergency access/egress for the Exploratory Works site and reduce traffic safety risks with minor upgrades involving limited vegetation clearing. • In summary, the Department consider that removing the barge infrastructure and importing all material and plant to the Exploratory Works site by road is justified. <p>Conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade Lobs Hole Ravine Road – North to the satisfaction of the NPWS and TfNSW prior to its use as an emergency access/egress route. • Restrict the use of Lobs Hole Ravine Road – North to light vehicles unless there is an emergency and impose a daily limit on the number of light vehicles that may use the road. • Update the Traffic Management Plan for the Exploratory Works to include a heavy vehicle recovery strategy for the KNP and public road network and identify the measures that would be implemented to minimise the increased traffic impacts of the Exploratory Works.
<p>Assessment Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staging the assessment of the Snowy 2.0 and Transmission Project and cumulative impacts to the KNP 	<p>Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning legislation allows proponents to stage the assessments of complex projects and the Exploratory Works are a stand-alone stage that does not rely on subsequent stages progressing. Subsequent stages of Snowy 2.0 must assess the cumulative impacts of the project.