

Preparation of EES

The Environment Effects Statement (EES) documents a story about the proposed development. It provides a concise presentation of facts about the development, the environment in which it will occur, the potential environmental and social effects of the project, the proposed measures to protect the environmental and social values, and the residual risks related to those values.

The approach of Coffey to impact assessment is that of a 'top down' assessment. This means that the likely issues and risks are identified up-front (through consultation, client workshops, and based on past experience and knowledge) and the assessment then seeks to address those issues. This is in contrast to all-encompassing studies that attempt to characterise and assess everything in the project area with the hope that potential impacts will manifest themselves from the findings.

In other words, the 'top down' approach should seek to answer the questions that need to be answered for stakeholders to make an informed decision about the project.

A top down approach has been successfully employed by Coffey on many occasions because it ensures that the EES focusses on the issues and risks that really matter. While making the impact assessment process much more straightforward, this pragmatic approach also avoids unnecessary cost associated with 'academic' technical studies. The scopes of the Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project EES investigations will therefore be commensurate to the importance of the issue and the level of risk. Coffey, through its experience helping clients navigate the EES process, knows where the effort should be directed and where it should not.

The EES will be a synthesis of the findings from a range of specialist technical studies, such as terrestrial biodiversity, aquatic ecology, noise, air quality, traffic, radiation, socio-economic, cultural heritage, visual assessment, land rehabilitation and land use. It will be crucial that the EES document brings together the large volumes of data and information into a concise and clear story, which informs stakeholders of the implications of the project.

Coffey will use its wealth of experience and specialist EES technical writers to ensure that a logically structured and cohesive document is prepared while at the same time ensuring the EES preparation is efficient and avoids swathes of authors and endless review cycles. Typically, Coffey achieves this by using a small but tight-knit team, with the specialist study managers preparing the aspects of the EES relevant to those studies under their management. The review team is two senior reviewers (Michael Sale and Carolyn Balint), who have detailed knowledge across the whole EES, so that consistency and technical accuracy is maintained.

As the technical studies will form the basis of the EES, careful consideration needs to be given to the scope of each of the studies. A collaborative approach between Kalbar and Coffey will be needed to ensure that the scopes of technical studies are well thought out, will address the key issues, will adhere to the EES scoping requirements and will answer the questions that need to be answered.

The content of the EES will be directed by formal terms of reference, which in Victoria are termed 'EES Scoping Requirements'. The EES study program are usually prepared by the proponent (and its consultant) and submitted to government for review and form the basis of the draft scoping requirements. The draft scoping requirements once compiled by DELWP, will subsequently be subjected to public review.

From Coffey's experience preparing scoping requirements for EES in Victoria we recognise the importance of seeking the inputs from the proponent and specialist subconsultants, usually in the form of a risk assessment workshop, so that the key issues are identified, the risks understood, and ultimately sound EES scopes are prepared. The opportunity to talk through the EES scope as a team and prepare a program of technically defensible specialist studies should not be underestimated. This early collaboration will be one foundation of a successful Fingerboards Mineral Sands Project EES.