

# Statement of Reasons

## APA GROUP – NT LINK PROJECT

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### PROJECT

The APA Group proposes to construct and operate a high pressure underground gas pipeline between its existing facilities on the Amadeus Gas Pipeline, approximately 40 km northwest of Tennant Creek, Northern Territory, and the Carpentaria Gas Pipeline near Mount Isa, Queensland. The pipeline would be 632 km in length; approximately 459 km would be in the Northern Territory.

The pipeline would be buried within a 30 m wide construction corridor and mostly trenched using conventional open trenching methods. Major infrastructure, such as road and rail lines, would be crossed using trenchless construction techniques. Supporting infrastructure would include temporary workforce camps, access roads and above ground facilities, such as a gas processing facility, meter stations, scraper stations, compressors and mainline valves, at intervals along the pipeline route.

The APA Group proposes to commence construction activities in the second half of 2016 and begin commissioning in early 2018. The pipeline would be designed to have an operational life of 60 years.

The APA Group submitted the notice of intent for the NT Link Project to the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority (NT EPA) on 7 July 2015 for consideration under the *Environmental Assessment Act* (EA Act).

### CONSULTATION

NT EPA staff have reviewed the NOI in consultation with Northern Territory Government (NTG) advisory bodies, as required by clause 8(1) of the Environmental Assessment Administrative Procedures.

### JUSTIFICATION

Consultation with NTG advisory bodies identified that there is a risk of significant impact to the environment from the NT Link Project. Issues contributing to this conclusion include:

- Potential impacts on biodiversity from land clearing and construction activities (e.g. trenching, etc.). Risks and mitigation measures have yet to be adequately addressed, especially in relation to the identification and protection of threatened species listed under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and the Northern Territory *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* yet to be surveyed and in the control of declared weeds.
- Increased risk of soil erosion and dust generation. Some soils that occur along the proposed pipeline route are highly sensitive to disturbance and have poor recovery potential once disturbed.

- The NT Link Project is likely to increase demand and/or impact on existing services and infrastructure, including roads, air transport networks and water supplies. NTG advisory bodies identified that the NOI lacked sufficient information to address service requirements; disruptions to services; capacity of current infrastructure to meet the demands of the project; and appropriate mitigation measures. The increased demand on the transport network has the potential to damage local infrastructure and impact on the safety of users, including seasonal tourists.
- The sourcing of water for pipeline hydrostatic testing, dust suppression and construction camp consumption, and the disposal of waters from the NT Link Project (e.g. hydro-test water) are yet to be defined by the APA Group. The potential impacts on water users and downstream ecosystems are currently unknown.
- Potential impacts to stakeholders, including land holders and Traditional Owners, due to land access and disruptions from construction and maintenance activities.
- Potential social, cultural and economic impacts, including the risks of the Project not realising its projected economic and social benefits.

Uncertainty exists around the scope of the NT Link Project in relation to operational factors, timeframes and feasibility. The NT Link Project is considered to be of a size and scale to connect areas, and communities, that have been previously difficult to access. It is therefore essential at this early stage to ensure development is conducted in a manner which will be sustainable and not cause adverse environmental and social impacts.

## DECISION

The NT EPA considers that there is a risk of significant impact to the environment from the NT Link Project and a number of risks cannot be adequately characterised without further studies and a more comprehensive assessment. The NT EPA has decided that an environmental impact statement is necessary in respect of the proposed NT Link Project.



DR BILL FREELAND

CHAIR

NORTHERN TERRITORY ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AUTHORITY

10 AUGUST 2015