

Statement of Reasons

TELLUS HOLDINGS LTD – CHANDLER SALT MINE PROJECT – CLAUSE 14A VARIATION

PROJECT

The Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority (NT EPA) decided in March 2013 that the Tellus Holdings Pty Ltd (the Proponent) Chandler Salt Mine Project (the Project) requires assessment under the *Environmental Assessment Act* at the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) level.

The Proponent wrote to the NT EPA on 21 April 2016 to provide a notice of an alteration to the Project under clause 14A of the Environmental Assessment Administrative Procedures. The Proponent has withdrawn some aspects of the Project from its 2012 Notice of Intent (NOI) and proposed a number of additional aspects. Aspects of the Project that have been withdrawn include:

- solar evaporation ponds as no wet processing of salt will occur
- a proposed container receiving station in Darwin.

Additional aspects proposed include:

- construction of a surface storage and transfer facility located adjacent to the proposed rail siding, with a maximum storage capacity of 400,000 tonnes of bulk waste (including hazardous wastes) materials from a variety of sources. Although the activity of temporary surface storage of waste material was included in the 2012 NOI, a new location (i.e. at the rail siding) has been proposed and the amount of waste stored above-ground and land surface area have increased substantially
- construction of new private access road (60 km) from the Stuart Highway to the proposed rail siding. The 2012 NOI proposed use of existing public roads but this has been altered to address health and safety concerns in relation to interaction between project vehicles and public vehicles
- utilisation of 'hydraulic backfill' as a method of waste emplacement in mined-out voids.

CONSULTATION

NT EPA staff have reviewed the notice of an alteration in consultation with Northern Territory Government (NTG) advisory bodies. The Chair has consulted with the Minister for Mines and Energy (responsible Minister).

JUSTIFICATION

Consultation with NTG advisory bodies identified that there were potential risks arising from the altered project components with respect to:

- land clearing associated with construction of a new 60 km access road and a surface waste storage and transfer facility that could impact on fauna and habitat availability
- storage of large volumes of wastes above-ground that could impact on surface and/or ground waters if there is a significant spill or leak that is not contained on site

- containment of wastes stored underground using the hydraulic backfilling method and possible interaction with groundwater.

In considering the above risks in addition to risks identified in the NT EPA's March 2013 Statement of Reasons, the NT EPA concludes that the alterations will not diminish the environmental significance of the risks and potential impacts arising as a result of the Project. The overall level of environmental significance of the project therefore remains such that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is required. The project will continue to be assessed at the level of an EIS.

DECISION

In accordance with clause 14A(3) of the EAAP, the NT EPA has reconsidered the environmental significance of the proposed action. The NT EPA is of the opinion that the environmental significance of the proposed action has not changed and decided that an Environmental Impact Statement is necessary with respect to the proposed action.



DR BILL FREELAND

CHAIR

NORTHERN TERRITORY ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AUTHORITY

☞ MAY 2016