

## Review of environmental effects assessment

The Department of Infrastructure commenced a review of environmental assessment procedures under the *Environment Effects Act 1978* (Vic) and the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.

The aims of the review include:

- To review current procedures for the environmental assessment of projects;
- To develop improved procedures for environmental assessment of projects that may have significant environmental impacts;
- To evaluate the need for, and appropriate scope and form of, environment assessment of strategic proposals (including for land use, development, resource management, or application of new technologies) that may have significant environmental impacts.

A Stakeholder Reference Group has been established so that key stakeholders may directly inform the Review and enable represented groups to provide input. NELA (VIC) has been included in the Group as a representative of professional planning and environment organisations.

It is expected that an Issues Paper and Options Paper will be released in mid 2001 for public comment. Further information can be found at [www.doi.vic.gov.au/doi/internet/...entReview+of+EA+procedures](http://www.doi.vic.gov.au/doi/internet/...entReview+of+EA+procedures)

## Mineral Resources Development (Amendment) Act 2000

This Act amends the *Mineral Resources Development Act 1990* (Vic). The amending Act received assent late last year and the Department of Natural Resources and Environment anticipate that most of the Act's provisions will come into operation on 1 July 2001.

Amongst other things, the Act clarifies the processes for amending a mine work plan that has been the subject of an environmental effects statement (EES). Where an applicant seeks to vary an approved work plan that has been subject to an EES, the licensee is not required to obtain another planning permit for the additional work, if the Minister for Energy and Resources and the Minister for Planning are satisfied that the new works will not significantly impact on the environment. The Minister for Energy and Resources approves the variation of the work plan.

The Department will also be undertaking a full review of the regulations made pursuant to the Act. This is likely to commence next year. In the meantime consequential amendments to the current regulations will be drafted.

## Forestry Rights (Amendment) Bill 2000

This Bill proposes to amend the *Forestry Rights Act 1996* (Vic) to enable carbon sequestration rights to be recognised as a separate right from the right of land and forest ownership. The Bill allows forest owners to enter into an agreement to assign carbon sequestration rights to a third party. The Bill is currently before the Legislative Council.

## Review of State Environment Protection Policy (SEPP) Air Quality

The EPA has drafted an amendment to a SEPP which will significantly tighten air quality control in Victoria. The draft SEPP was available for public comment until 1 April 2001. Broadly speaking the aims of the draft SEPP include the application of the principles of ecologically sustainable development and the support of government measures to address greenhouse gas emissions.

### **Commissioner for Ecologically Sustainable Development**

The Victorian Government has issued a Consultation Paper on the establishment of a Commissioner for Ecologically Sustainable Development. Input into this process will be used to assist the development of a legislative framework for the establishment of the office of the Commissioner. The Paper seeks comment and input as to what roles and responsibilities should be granted to the Commissioner.

Submissions closed on 23 February 2001. Legislation is being drafted for introduction into Parliament in 2001.

### **New Industrial Waste Management Policy**

The Victorian Government has recently released a new Action Plan and Industrial Waste Management Policy that provides the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) with increased powers to impose restrictions on industry with respect to the management of their waste.

The Industrial Waste Management Policy (Prescribed Waste) was formulated by the Victorian EPA. It provides the legal framework to progressively discourage the use of hazardous waste landfills by encouraging greater re-use, recycling and recovery of hazardous wastes. An advisory committee will be established, reporting to the Major Projects Minister.