

# EPA works approvals



Environment  
Protection  
Authority Victoria

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Community information

## What is a works approval?

A works approval is a document issued by Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA) permitting, subject to certain conditions, the construction of a plant, the installation of equipment or the modification of a process. A works approval is required for industrial and waste management activities that have the potential for significant environmental impact.

Works approvals were introduced in the 1980s as an addition to EPA's licensing framework, to allow EPA, industry and affected or interested parties to identify and resolve potential environmental problems before a project is commenced. By working at the project design stage, energy, water and waste savings can be made, resulting in cost effective and environmentally sound projects.

A works approval is required for proposed works which will result in one or more of the following:

- a discharge of waste to the environment (to air, a waterway or land)
- an increase in, or alteration to, an existing discharge
- a change in the way waste is treated or stored.

EPA processes around 50 works approval applications each year, mostly for changes to existing licensed sites.

## Which industries need a works approval?

The *Environment Protection Act 1970* (EP Act) (section 19B) requires that before certain industries or industrial processes can be established, they may require a works approval from EPA.

These industries are outlined in the Environment Protection (Scheduled Premises) Regulations 2017. Scheduled premises include industries such as waste facilities, sewage treatment plants, power stations, intensive animal industries, milk processing and chemical works.

Not all works on scheduled premises need a works approval. Maintenance work and alterations specifically aimed at reducing emissions may not require a works approval. A works approval is also not needed where the work is covered by an existing EPA licence. A special research development and demonstration approval (see section 19D) can be used for projects for research and development purposes. EPA can also issue an emergency or commissioning approval (see section 30A).

## What information is contained in a works approval application?

Works approval applications must contain comprehensive details on:

- track record of the applicant
- technical specifications and design of the proposal
- proposed discharges to the environment, including air and noise emissions and discharges to land and water
- manufacturing and waste treatment facilities including energy and water usage
- consistency with environmental best practice design
- consistency with relevant state environment protection policies, waste management policies and guidelines
- evidence that the project will not cause pollution, cause an environmental hazard or endanger public health
- relevant permits under the local council land use planning scheme (the works approval may be issued conditional on appropriate local council planning).

## How does EPA assess a works approval application?

EPA has up to four months to assess a works approval application and decide whether to issue the works approval or not. Submissions from the community and other stakeholders (including referral bodies like the local council or Department of Health) are sought during this time. We may extend this timeframe if we need further information to make an assessment.

EPA assesses the potential impact of the works against the requirements of the EP Act, and one or more of the state environment protection policies or other policies (for example a waste management policy) and guidelines.

When assessing a works approval application EPA has no power to make decisions on:

- vegetation clearance (performed by the local council and Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning)
- planning and location of the site (performed by the local council)
- adequacy of external stormwater infrastructure (performed by the local council)



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- visual amenity of the operations (performed by the local council)
- external transport ramifications (performed by VicRoads).

## Public comment

All works approval applications are advertised in local newspapers and the full works approval application can be downloaded, free of charge, from EPA's website ([www.epa.vic.gov.au](http://www.epa.vic.gov.au)). A summary of an application can be obtained, for a fee of \$8, from EPA's head office or the relevant regional office (for an application relating to that region).

The works approval process includes a public comment stage, designed to identify any community concerns early, when they can most readily be resolved. Public submissions in writing are open for 21 days from the date of the advertisement.

EPA takes public submissions into account in deciding whether to issue a works approval. We may also call a meeting with interested parties under section 20B of the EP Act. This meeting is aimed to ensure that we are fully informed of community concerns.

## What happens when EPA grants a works approval?

When a works approval application is approved, the approved works can commence, subject to the works approval holder having local government planning approval and any other required approvals.

EPA has the power to specify additional conditions as part of the works approval, to minimise the environmental impact of the works.

## Planning and other approvals

Local government administers planning schemes and is responsible for ensuring that planning permit applications for industry are properly assessed. Local councils assess compliance with existing planning permits and can take action to address amenity and health issues.

EPA is a statutory referral authority through the planning process. EPA has a role in the location of industry by advising planning authorities on recommended buffer distances. EPA refers applications to the Department of Health and, where relevant, to other government agencies.

## Further information

For further information about works approvals please refer to our website at [www.epa.vic.gov.au](http://www.epa.vic.gov.au) or contact EPA Victoria on 1300 372 842 (1300 EPA VIC).

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Figure 1: The works approval process

