

Development Licence application assessment summary

Application number	APP026623
Applicant name	VHM Limited
Registered address	Suite 8 10 Hay Street, Subiaco, Western Australia 6008, Australia
Development activity, address and proposal	Development of the Goschen Mineral Sands and Rare Earths project at Bennett Road, Lalbert VIC 3542 (Parcel 44/PP2691). The application is for the construction and commissioning of: • K01 (Power generation) A power station utilizing a 7,200 kVA configuration, which includes: 6 generator sets, building, exhaust stacks, and associated noise and air emission control systems. • A03 – Sewage Treatment: A sequencing batch reactor (SBR) sewage treatment plant with a design capacity of 20,000 litres per day. Wastewater will be treated to Class B recycled water standards and reused in the processing circuit.
Decision	Approved
Decision date	20 July 2026

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Background

VHM Limited (VHM) proposes to undertake the Goschen Mineral Sands and Rare Earths project, which would consist of mining and processing heavy mineral sands and rare earths into the following:

- mixed heavy mineral concentrate (HMC),
- zircon concentrate,
- rutile product,
- leucoxene products,
- ilmenite product, and
- rare earth mineral products.

The products generated from processing the ore will be exported overseas.

Some components of the project require a development licence from the Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA) under the *Environmental Protection Act 2017* (EP Act).

Matters beyond the scope of the EP Act were considered by the Minister for Planning under Victoria's Environment Effects Act 1978 (EE Act).

On 8 December 2024, the Minister for Planning completed her assessment under the EE Act. More information can be found on the Department of Transport and Planning [website](#).

In assessing the application, EPA has considered the inquiry and advisory committee's (IAC) assessment and the Minister for Planning's recommendations. This includes the proposed and relevant mitigation measures for:

- noise emissions
- air emissions
- wastewater management
- solid wastes and biosolids management
- fire and firewater containment

This report provides a summary of the components relevant to the development licence, assessed under s69 of the EP Act and subordinate legislation.

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Application overview

On 18 December 2024, VHM Limited submitted a development licence application for the following prescribed activities:

Application number	Activity description	Prescribed activity
APP026623	Development of a power station and sewage treatment plant as part of the Goschen Mineral Sands and Rare Earths project.	K01 (Power generation) Six diesel generators (five duty, one standby) providing up to 7,200 kVA of continuous electrical power for the mineral processing circuit.
		A03 (Sewage treatment) A Sequencing Batch Reactor (SBR) plant with a design capacity of 20,000 litres per day to treat domestic wastewater for 100% on-site reuse.

Community consultation and submissions

The development licence application, planning scheme amendment (PSA), and the Environmental Effect Statement (EES), were subject to a joint advertisement under the EP Act and EE Act.

The joint advertisement was open for public comment as follows:

- 20 November 2023 to 17 January 2024
 - Public exhibition of the EES
- 25 March and 30 April 2024
 - Public hearings held by a combined IAC

In accordance with s52(2)(e) of the EP Act, submissions on the development licence applications were recorded via the EES process.

In total, 182 submissions were received.

EPA considered the key themes, concerns and suggestions raised in submissions as part of its assessment.

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Assessment

EPA carried out a risk-based assessment of the applications under the EP Act, and relevant environmental policies. It assessed potential impacts, community and stakeholder feedback, and advice from external agencies.

EPA has considered all items set out in section 69(3) and 69(4) of the EP Act, as well as additional statutory obligations on the EPA, such as:

- Climate Action Act 2017
- Flora & Fauna Guarantee Act 1988
- Charter for Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.

General environmental duty (GED) and best available techniques and technologies (BATT)

The [GED](#) requires all Victorians to eliminate their risks of harm to human health and environment. If that is not possible, they must reduce those risks so far as reasonably practicable.

Under s69(3)(a) of the EP Act, EPA *"must take into account any measures the applicant has taken or proposes to take to comply with the General Environmental Duty when engaging in the activity subject of the application"*.

GED requirements are specified in s25(1) and (4) of the EP Act, as summarised below:

- s25(1) - minimise risks of harm to human health or the environment from pollution or waste, so far as reasonably practicable.
- s25(4) - set out the actions, as listed in the table below

GED requirements under S25(4) of the Act	
(a)	Use and maintain plant, equipment, processes and systems in a manner that minimises risks of harm to human health and the environment from pollution and waste.
(b)	Use and maintain systems for identification, assessment and control of risks of harm to human health and the environment from pollution and waste that may arise in connection with the activity, and for the evaluation of the effectiveness of controls.
(c)	Use and maintain adequate systems to ensure that if a risk of harm to human health or the environment from pollution or waste were to eventuate, its harmful effects would be minimised.
(d)	Ensure that all substances are handled, stored, used or transported in a manner that minimises risks of harm to human health and the environment from pollution and waste.
(e)	Provide information, instruction, supervision and training to any person engaging in an activity to enable those persons to comply with the duty under subsection (1).

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Further, under s69(3)(d), EPA *"must take into account best available techniques or technologies"*.

EPA considers that the BATT measures are consistent and complementary with the minimisation of risks and the preventative approach of GED (s25(1)). Thus, BATT and GED have been assessed together.

Fit and proper person

VHM Limited has provided completed fit and proper person and prohibited person questionnaires and provided relevant material to support their questionnaire responses.

EPA is satisfied that the applicant is a fit and proper person.

This is not a static determination. A person or company's status may change and can be reviewed by EPA.

Key issues

Wastewater management

EPA has assessed the proposed wastewater management and treatment technology.

EPA considers that off-site nutrient and pathogen risks can be eliminated so far as reasonably practicable. Treated effluent will be reused within the active mineral processing circuit. Diversion infrastructure will be installed to redirect any off-spec effluent back through the treatment process.

EPA is satisfied with the approach used to manage domestic wastewater generated at the site.

Solid wastes and biosolids

EPA has assessed the proposed waste management measures of Reportable Priority Wastes (RPW) and biosolids from the prescribed activities.

These wastes will be segregated and stored appropriately before disposal by licensed contractors.

EPA is satisfied with the proposed waste management approach.

Fire and firewater containment

A deficiency in the proposal's firewater containment measures was identified during the EES process. VHM provided a revised power station design.

EPA has assessed the revised design, which incorporates necessary controls such as bunding and emergency shut off and diversion mechanisms.

EPA is satisfied that the revised design can minimize risks of harm to human health and the environment and is compliant with the GED.

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Noise emissions

EPA has assessed the potential noise impact of the proposal.

The revised power station design includes acoustic controls to minimize noise emissions. EPA is satisfied that the proposed noise controls are consistent with GED and BATT.

VHM Limited must install acoustic controls and develop a noise monitoring program as a condition of the development licence.

Assessment outcome

EPA's assessment concluded that:

- a. VHM Limited can meet its General Environmental Duty;
- b. The proposal is consistent with relevant best available technique and technology;
- c. The risks of harm to human health and the environment posed by the proposal can be reduced so far as reasonably practicable; and
- d. Residual risks can be managed by conditions of the development licence, incorporating recommendations from the Minister of Planning, where applicable.

The assessment recommended the issuing of the Development Licence, pursuant to Section 69(1)(a) of the Act, subject to strict conditions.

Conditions of approval

The Development Licence is subject to conditions. Some conditions must be met prior to the commencement of construction, and others relate to the commissioning of the facility.

VHM Limited must meet the requirements of the development licence to the satisfaction of EPA before it can operate the works.

You can view DL000300088 and its conditions on the [public register](#).