

GIPPSLAND LAKES OCEAN ACCESS

EES compliance –  
self-assessment  
External peer review

APPENDIX H2

Supporting technical and  
environmental studies





PO Box 386  
Wandong, Victoria 3758  
**Mobile** 0417 150 301  
**Email** jennihale@bigpond.com  
ABN 35 014 550 520

David Holding  
Executive Manager Maritime Services,  
Gippsland Ports  
Lakes Entrance Deport  
Bullock Island, Lakes Entrance  
VIC 3909

**Date:** July 15, 2022

**Re: Gippsland Lakes Ocean Access – Environmental Effects Statement (EES) Self-Assessment**

The Gippsland Lakes Ocean Access (GLOA) program maintains reliable navigational access between the Gippsland Lakes and Bass Strait for commercial and recreational vessels. The program achieves this objective via dredging of the Entrance and Inner Channels with a Trailing Suction Hopper Dredge and a smaller Cutter Suction Dredge. The program has been in place for many years and a permanent connection between the ocean and the lakes has been in place since 1889.

The GLOA is conducted in accordance with an Environmental Management Plan (EMP) and is underpinned by a monitoring program and an annual external audit. The EMP imposes seasonal restrictions to protect significant environmental values, including provisions to preclude dredging activities during shorebird breeding and migration periods (i October and March inclusive); turbidity restrictions during the Australian Grayling migration (September to January). As well as permanent cetacean proximity protocols and restrictions.

Ethos NRM Pty Ltd have undertaken an assessment for the requirement of an EES for the Gippsland Lakes Ocean Access program based on the criteria for referral provided in the Ministerial guidelines for assessment of environmental effects under the Environment Effects Act 1978. I was commissioned to peer review the EES self-assessment to ensure it meets with accepted scientific and environmental impact approaches.

In undertaking the review, I provided initial advice on an earlier draft of the self-assessment as well as reviewing the final report. The final report has been improved with a strengthening of the evidence particularly with respect to the Gippsland Lakes Ramsar Site and threatened species.

Based on my experience and knowledge of the Gippsland Lakes and the GLOA, I consider that the dredging and placement of dredged material for the GLOA program does not meet any of the criteria, as established in the Ministerial guidelines for assessment of environmental effects under the Environment Effects Act 1978 (DSE, 2006), for individual or a combination of potential environmental effects that might be of regional or state significance.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jennifer Hale", written in a cursive style.

Jennifer Hale  
Aquatic Ecologist