

Infrastructure above Morgan Gorge

The landscape report (LVLA) from page 53-58 discusses any potentially adverse effects of the intake structure / weir. This section of the report also refers to a 5m wide "intake access road", linking the entrance of the intake structure to the upper portal via tracks A and B (Map 5, appendix 1). Track AB would be a permanent feature as it would convey maintenance vehicles that would be stored in the upper portal. Five metres wide seems generous – the report does not indicate what type of vehicle would be used. However, through discussions with Westpower representatives during my site visit, I understood that the track would convey a 4WD motorbike and small digger? This may not require a 5m width. In this instance, the lesser earthworks the better. In addition, an 8-10m diameter turning circle located immediately adjacent to the high tunnel portal is proposed. Again, is this size necessary? The report states that these earthworks will require tree removal and include cuts and batters up to 2m in height. The report states that the alignment of these vehicle manoeuvring areas will be finalised on site. Map 5 also shows a large area in which "works location adjustment may occur". This is a large mapped area overlying a very sensitive landscape, part of which includes some steep slopes.

From my site inspection, a 5m wide access track and 8-10m diameter turning area (and the batters above and below) could be a relatively large intervention in this highly natural landscape. Compounding this is the fact that the terrain near the proposed portal/track area is steepish, relatively scant vegetation-wise and often cast in shade. This suggests it would not be the easiest of earthworks to mitigate – vegetation establishment would be slower. It would also be visible to anyone located on the true left of the river near the gorge entry.

The photomontages do not include this track AB/turning area. Were these elements included, cumulative effects of the proposal at this key landscape point (entrance to the gorge) might come into play. At present the lack of any detail of this part of the proposal (which is permanent), leaves a gap in the LVLA.

The report also refers to a proposed link from the contractor's yard to the intake site. This would be temporary, and the area remediated following construction. The location of this is shown as indicative only (Map 5, appendix 1). This track is also stated as being 5m wide. From my site visit, were the track to angle down the face of the escarpment, it could be highly visible, and leave disturbed ground that might be slower to regenerate given the shady aspect.

It would be beneficial and provide further certainty if the applicant could provide a plan of the complete infrastructure works above Morgan Gorge overlying an air photo (at a scale and level of detail similar to that in Figure 9/pg10), an additional photomontage including the high portal, tracks AB and turning platform, a worst case scenario cross-section of track AB and turning platform plus methodology on proposed revegetation/rehabilitation works.

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