

Public Environment Report

Chapter 17

Information sources

September 2019



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17.1 Introduction

The PER Guidelines require, in section 2.13, the PER to state the following for information used in the PER:

- The source of the information
- How recent the information is
- How the reliability of the information was tested
- What uncertainties (if any) are in the information.

This chapter responds to this requirement.

17.2 Information sources

The PER was informed by technical studies carried out to understand the existing conditions of the study area and assess the potential impacts of the action. The approach involved key team members reviewing existing literature, undertaking desktop assessments and conducting field surveys.

To complete this process, the technical studies utilised and referenced a large number of existing sources.

Key members of the study team to complete the PER assessment are provided in Attachment VI – List of persons involved in preparing the PER.

Information sources are referenced throughout the PER and the corresponding Technical Appendices. For a list of references for the PER, refer to Attachment VII – Reference list. The list includes references to sources of information and to reference materials.

17.3 Status of data

The PER has been informed by the technical reports and therefore the status of information in the technical reports correlates to the status of information in the PER. These technical reports list the relevant sources and references used with the corresponding published date.

As noted above, technical studies referred to published sources as well as data collected from field surveys.

Ecological surveys and geotechnical investigations undertaken to inform technical assessments have been underway since 2017, and in some cases reports include provision for further study and survey post-construction.

Ecological surveys were conducted over nine periods in winter 2017, spring 2017, summer 2017/2018, autumn 2018, winter 2018, spring 2018, summer 2018/2019, autumn 2019 and winter 2019. Separate field surveys were undertaken for flora, terrestrial fauna and aquatic fauna. Surveys were undertaken in accordance with relevant Australian Standards and guidelines. Details of these are outlined in the respective chapters. Targeted surveys may continue for certain species if required.

Geotechnical investigations commenced mid-2017 and are continuing to support detailed design of the project. The geotechnical program comprised multiple investigation phases to provide site-specific hydrogeological data. The information referred to in the PER refers to data collected as recently as mid-2019.

The list of references in Attachment VII includes the publish date of the information sources used in the PER.

17.4 Information reliability

The reliability and accuracy of the information sources in the PER has been tested via detailed internal review and ongoing discussions with the Australian Government's Department of the Environment and Energy and Department of Defence. A conservative approach was adopted in all investigations and all reports are in accordance with generally accepted environmental consulting practice.

The project has been managed under the quality management system of the lead consultant, GHD. GHD's Quality Management System has third party certification against ISO9001:2015 with Approval number 0048072.

The PER was developed from the technical reports based on scientific methods in accordance with relevant standards and guidelines as noted in the PER and Technical Appendices. Limitations that apply to field surveys conducted for North East Link are explained in the PER and technical reports. Notwithstanding these limitations, the extent of field survey and accuracy of information available from other sources were considered adequate for the purpose of identifying potential impacts from the action on environmental values.

17.5 Mitigating uncertainty

The precautionary principle has been applied in relation to any scientific uncertainty associated with quality of information collected from the surveys and then assessed. There is some degree of uncertainty associated with the impact assessments being based on a reference project that would still undergo further refinement and development. These refinements would need to be consistent with North East Link objectives, meet the final Environmental Performance Requirements (EPRs) as approved by the Victorian Minister for Planning, and fall within the project boundary for the action. An independent environmental auditor would review the adequacy of and verify that contractor's environmental management and design documentation meets the requirements of the EPRs.