

## Your details

Please provide your name and your job title and organisation (if relevant), and indicate if your comments are confidential.

<b>Name:</b>	Ian Wallis
<b>Job Title:</b>	
<b>Organisation:</b>	CEE
<b>Confidential:</b>	No

Please send your comments to [approvals.review@epa.vic.gov.au](mailto:approvals.review@epa.vic.gov.au) by Friday 7 December 2012.

## Your comments

Please note – The text below is abridged. Please refer to the Draft Report for the full text of what is proposed (e.g. A.1 – A.4, not just A.).

### A new risk-based assessment system (Chapter 4 of Draft Report)

A. EPA will use a risk-based selection tool to determine the level of assessment required for each development proposal.

This is a good approach – but assumes that the each person making the assessment has the experience and knowledge to make a correct assessment. Is there a review/verification stage?

### Streamlined and efficient (Chapter 5 of Draft Report)

B. EPA will consistently, confidently and efficiently apply exemptions where allowed under the EP Act. The exemption pathway will have a four week turn-around, from submission of a proposal to a response in writing from EPA notifying the applicant of the decision.

Good idea. However the review of the recent works approvals showed that everything was not as anticipated. Thus EPA will need to continue to have site inspections to identify exempted premises where the situation has changed.

C. EPA will introduce a new fast track works approval pathway for low-risk proposals.

Good

D. EPA will reduce pre-application timeframes for standard works approvals and RD&D approvals.

Good

E. In response to an excessive number of section 30A emergency approval applications related to increased variability in rainfall patterns, EPA proposes to amend certain licences – relating to sewage treatment (A03) and extractive industry and mining (C01) scheduled premises – to allow discharges under restricted conditions, and to require these discharges to be reported in the licensee’s annual performance statement (APS). Emergency approvals will still be required outside of the restricted conditions, including for major upset conditions and unforeseen events.

Good – for example overflows from sewerage systems can be considered as ‘exempt’ for a greater than 1 in 5 year rainfall event. Even so, consideration of means to minimise environmental effects is still important. Thus need to address the consequence of overflows.

F. EPA will seek to improve the coordination of approvals by working with other agencies.

Necessary – will wait to see if an improvement is achieved in practice.

### **Effective at protecting the environment (Chapter 6)**

G. EPA will become more effective at protecting and enhancing the environment.

H. EPA will introduce a systematic process to periodically review standard conditions and EPA licences.

A 5 year review period seems reasonable.

I. EPA will work with business, community and government stakeholders to develop an alternative program to allow for recognition of excellence in environmental

performance across all EPA licensed sites.

OK, not a priority

### **Transparent, consistent and accountable (chapter 7)**

J. EPA will increase the transparency and accountability of its approvals system.

I agree that documentation of reasons for conditions is important, as it documentation of reasons for issuing a works approval that is widely opposed by the community..

### **Inclusive and Accessible (chapter 8)**

K. EPA will seek opportunities for improved interaction between the community and industry.

OK

### **Further comments and suggestions**

The scope of the review is stated to cover:  
“- use of EPA-appointed auditors in applications and assessments”

However, the only mention that I could find was  
EPA usually holds a meeting with the works approval applicant to discuss the content and level of detail required in the application. The applicant may engage a consultant to assist with the preparation of the application. For more complex proposals, applicants may engage an EPA-appointed Environmental Auditor to sign-off on the application before lodgement with EPA.

I suggest that use of EPA auditors to sign works approval applications can lead to a conflict of interest and the idea should be dropped.