

Section One

Introduction

This section introduces a project to remove and process some 7.4 million tonnes of sand on the Somersby Fields Project Site near the F3 Freeway at Somersby.

This section provides information on the following.

- *The scope and format of the document.*
- *The Proponent, Somersby Fields Partnership.*
- *The format of the Environmental Assessment.*
- *Relevant background about the project.*
- *A summary of the approvals process.*
- *The personnel involved in the project design, document preparation and specialist consultant investigations.*

1.1 SCOPE

The Somersby Fields Partnership, “the Proponent”, proposes to develop and operate a sand removal and processing operation on Lot 41, DP 104681 and Lot 1, DP 302768 (“the Project Site”) at Somersby. **Figure 1.1** presents the location of the Project Site in its context on the eastern side of the Somersby Plateau, 8km northwest of Gosford. **Figure 1.2** presents the local setting of the Project Site, 0.7km west of the Somersby Interchange of the F3 Freeway near Somersby.

This *Environmental Assessment* has been prepared to support the Proponent’s Application for Project Approval from the Minister for Planning for the proposed Somersby Fields Project. The *Environmental Assessment* describes the project and provides information on mitigation measures and management controls the Proponent would adopt to avoid or reduce potential impacts on both the Project Site and the surrounding environment. The residual impact(s) are described and proposed monitoring outlined to assess the environmental performance of the project. The *Environmental Assessment* has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of Part 3A, Section 75 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

The project is classified as a Major Project in accordance with the State Environmental Planning Policy (Major Projects) (2005) as the annual extraction rate exceeds 200 000tpa and the total reserve volume exceeds 5 million tonnes. The application is made possible by virtue of the fact that extractive industries are a permissible land use on the Project Site in accordance with the prevailing Gosford / Wyong Local Environmental Plan 2001 – Central Coast Plateau Areas. This instrument prevails over Gosford Interim Development Order 122 and relevant provisions of Sydney Regional Environmental Plans 8 and 9(2).



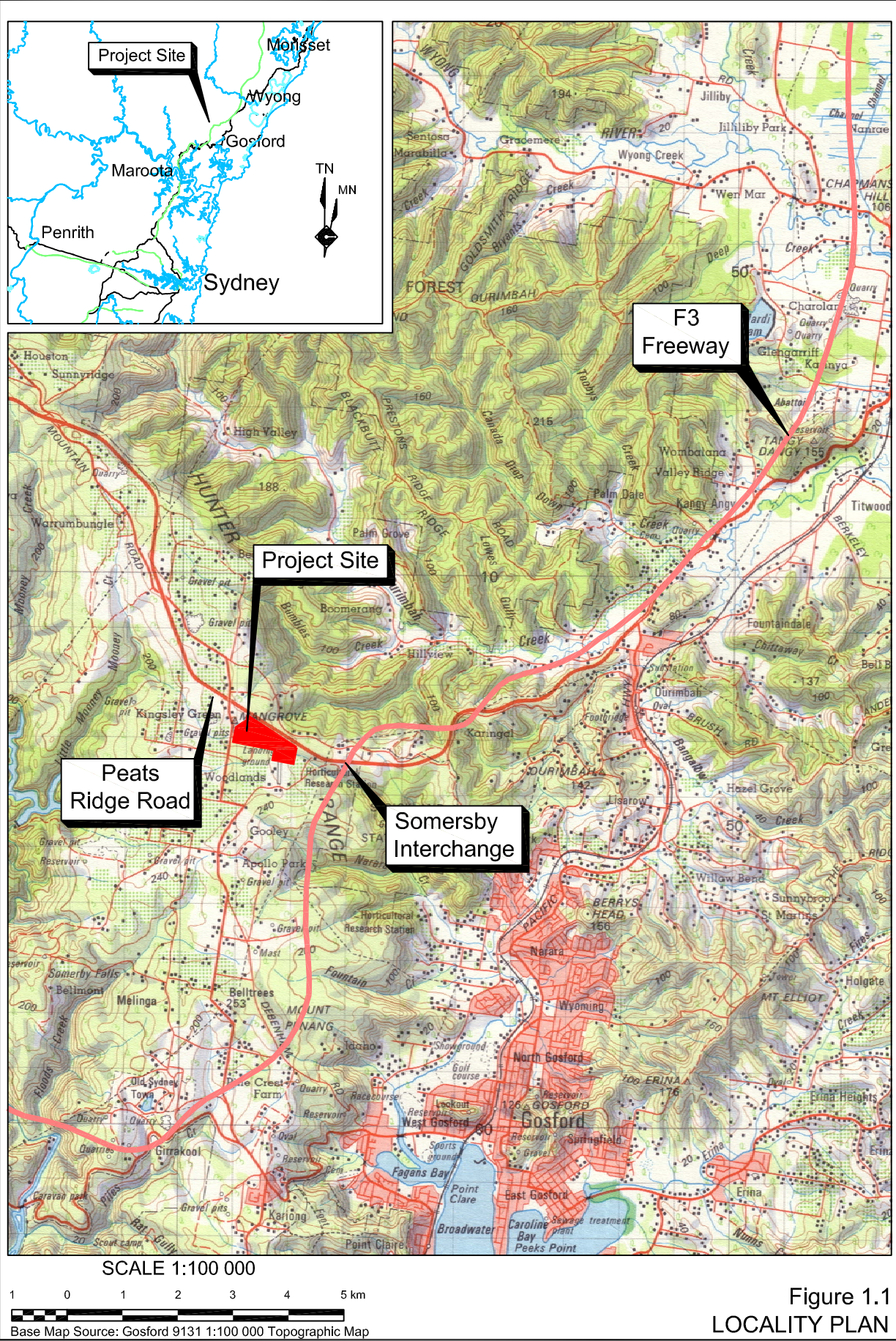
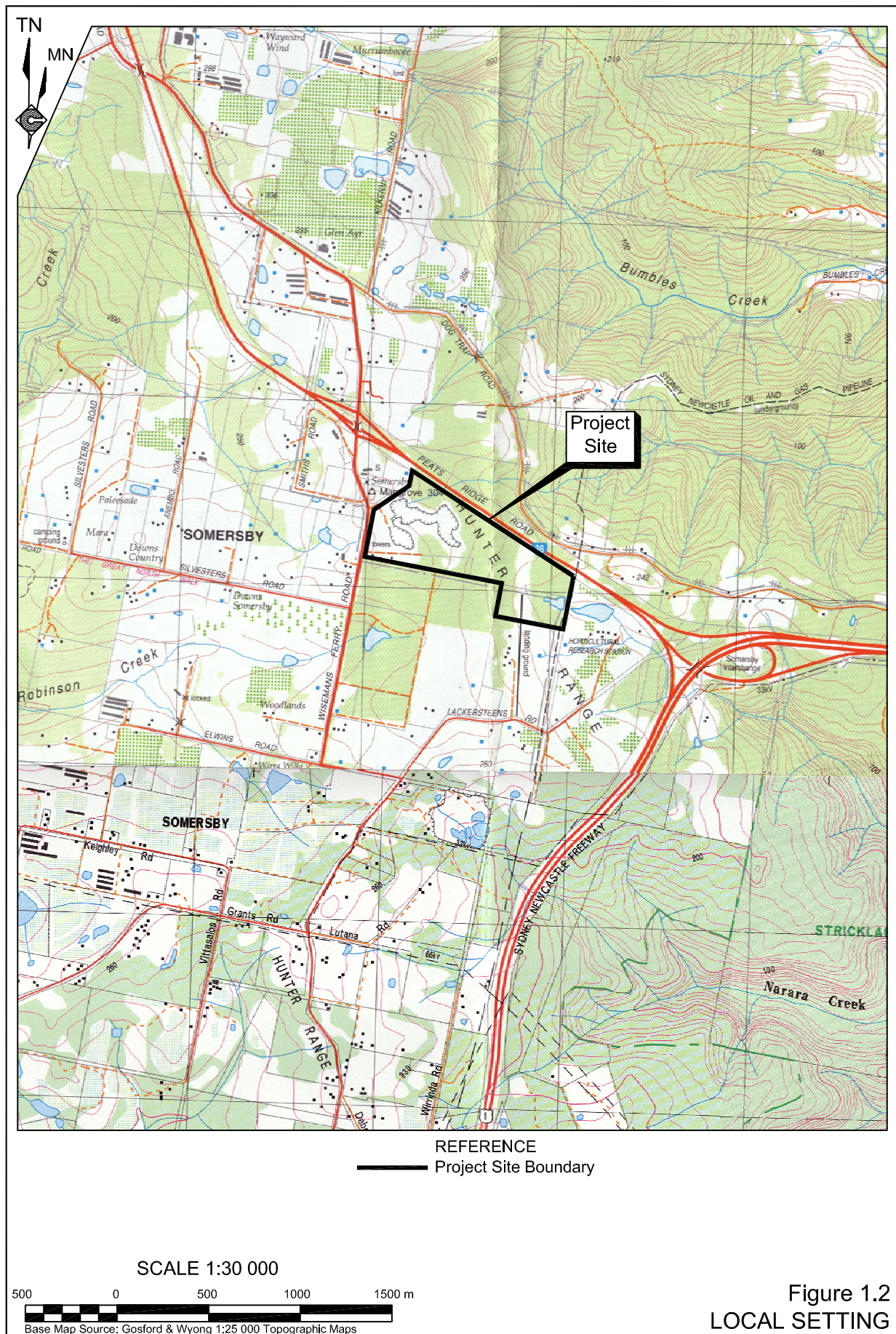


Figure 1.1
LOCALITY PLAN





In brief, the project would involve the following activities.

- Progressive removal of vegetation, topsoil, subsoil and overburden from the proposed area of sand removal to expose the fine sand resource.
- Removal of the exposed sand or friable sandstone that can be easily removed by excavator or bulldozer without any blasting.
- Processing of the removed sand either by washing, to produce concrete sand products, or dry screening, to produce mortar sand products.
- Loading and transportation of the sand products to markets in either Sydney or the Central Coast via Peats Ridge Road and the F3 Freeway.
- Landform reconstruction following sand removal involving the progressive placement and shaping of overburden and dewatered fine residues and revegetation.
- Rehabilitation / vegetation enhancement of the land within the Project Site beyond the planned area of disturbance.
- Reseeding and replanting of the created landform with endemic tree, shrub and grass species.

The project, if approved, would become a critically important source of fine sand now required for the construction industry in Sydney and on the Central Coast.

1.2 THE PROPONENT

The Somersby Fields Partnership is the name of the partnership comprising Messrs Michael Hoskins, Geoffrey Kells and John Lockett, the owners of the Project Site. These gentlemen bring to the project a wide range of operational and management skills and industry experience, ensuring the project is operated in an environmentally responsible manner. The partners have a combined total of more than 50 years experience in the construction and building materials industry, with additional experience in land use improvements.

The Proponent, through the experience and values of its directors, is committed to develop and operate the Somersby Fields Project in a manner that achieves all of the predicted outcomes presented in this document. Importantly, the Proponent recognises and intends to achieve a high standard of environmental performance and social responsibility throughout the life of the project. The Proponent firmly believes that the removal, processing, loading and transportation of the sand products needed by the wider community should not be achieved to the detriment of the local community around the source of the sand. The Proponent intends the Somersby Fields Project to become a best practice venture with benefits for both the local community and the construction industry.



1.3 DOCUMENT FORMAT

The *Environmental Assessment* has been structured to address the specific *Environmental Assessment* requirements nominated by the Director-General of the Department of Planning (the Director-General's Requirements (DGRs)), which themselves have been based on the requirements of the Department of Planning and other relevant State and local government agencies. The *Environmental Assessment* has been compiled in a single volume which includes six sections of text, a reference section, glossary, and a set of Appendices. The *Environmental Assessment* is supported by a two volume *Specialist Consultant Studies Compendium* incorporating the reports prepared by eight specialist environmental consultancies engaged to assess specific aspects of the project.

The format of the *Environmental Assessment* has been structured as follows.

- Section 1:** introduces the project, the Proponent and relevant background information. Information on the approvals process is provided together with information on the management of investigations for the *Environmental Assessment*.
- Section 2:** describes the Proponent's objectives and proposed sand removal, processing, transportation, waste management and rehabilitation activities.
- Section 3:** provides a summary of the consultation undertaken with the local community and relevant government agencies along with a review of relevant preliminary environmental studies. Key issues for assessment have been identified and prioritised based on the results of the consultation.
- Section 4:** presents a range of background information and a description of the existing environment, proposed management, assessment of potential impact and maintenance/monitoring requirements for the key issues identified in Section 3.
- Section 5:** provides a draft statement of commitments compiled by the Proponent in relation to environmental management and monitoring for the entire project.
- Section 6:** evaluates the project in terms of biophysical, economic and social considerations, and the goals and guidelines of Ecologically Sustainable Development. A conclusion as to the acceptability of the project based the above is presented to conclude the *Environmental Assessment*.
- Glossary of Technical Terms, Acronyms, Symbols and Units:** explains the technical terms, acronyms, symbols and units used throughout the *Environmental Assessment*.
- References:** lists the various source documents referred to for information and data used during the preparation of the *Environmental Assessment*.



Appendices: present the following additional information.

- (i) A copy of the Proponent's Application for Project Approval.
- (ii) The Director-General's Requirements.
- (iii) Tabulated summaries of the consultation undertaken, issues identified and reference to where each issue is addressed in the *Environmental Assessment*.
- (iv) An economic assessment of the project.

The *Environmental Assessment* has been prepared with eight specialist consultancies preparing a total of eleven specialist environmental assessments. Their reports have been compiled into a two-volume *Specialist Consultant Studies Compendium* which has been placed on exhibition with the *Environmental Assessment*. The contents of these reports are summarised into the appropriate section(s) of the *Environmental Assessment*.

1.4 PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Project Site has been recognised for many years as a source of construction materials. In the late 1970s, the then Department of Main Roads extracted a range of soil and lateritic ridge gravel products from the Project Site for construction of the F3 Freeway. During the early 1990s, a construction materials Company investigated the Project Site as a source of construction sand. That Company commissioned a range of geological / resource investigations and environmental studies but did not proceed to gain the necessary approvals to commence operations.

Whilst Somersby Mintbush was identified on the property in the mid 1990s, there were uncertainties regarding the significance of the population and the level of support from the then National Parks and Wildlife Service and Gosford City Council for a proposal involving clearing of part of the Somersby Mintbush population.

In 2000, the Proponent, having purchased the property, commenced a detailed program of resource evaluation to confirm the quantity and quality of the sand beneath the property. They similarly commenced a program of consultation with the local community, Gosford City Council and various State government agencies. This consultation is discussed further in Section 3.2.2.

Preparation included the design of a sand removal operation, which at that time covered approximately 26ha. The community consultation process for the initial project design (see Section 3.2.2), identified a number of issues. The Proponent subsequently re-designed the project to overcome the issues. The principal changes arising from the project re-design related to:

- commencing sand removal operations near the eastern end of the Project Site and moving towards the Somersby Public School (with an emphasis upon demonstrating acceptable performance);



- adopting a closed water circuit plus belt filter press, sand processing operation, thus eliminating settling dams;
- enclosing the wash plant in a building located near the centre of the Project Site; and
- committing all trucks to turn right when leaving the Project Site and travel towards the F3. No trucks would be allowed to travel westwards along Peats Ridge Road and past Somersby Public School adjacent to Wisemans Ferry Road.

A further important outcome from the Year 2000 community consultation program was the recognition that it is preferable for end land uses to be identified well ahead of the cessation of sand removal activities. Ideally, there should be a long term community benefit arising from a sand removal operation on the Project Site. Given the publicised lack of sporting facilities across the Central Coast, the concept of “Somersby Fields” was developed and formed the basis for ongoing consultation with Gosford City Council and community groups.

The preparation of this *Environmental Assessment* draws together the results of a wide range of studies, particularly groundwater and Somersby Mintbush investigations, where 10 years of research has been undertaken and provides the basis for this important project which would supply sand to the Sydney and Central Coast construction industry.

1.5 THE APPROVALS PROCESS

An overview of the approvals process is provided to assist readers understand the steps to be followed by the Proponent, government agencies (particularly the Department of Planning) and the community during the period from the commencement of the public exhibition of the *Environmental Assessment* until the determination of the project by the Minister for Planning.

An important feature of the approvals process under Part 3A of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act) will be the transparency / availability of information for all stakeholders throughout the process. Emphasis will be placed upon the inclusion of as much material as possible on the web site of the Department of Planning and R.W. Corkery & Co. Pty. Limited.

The approvals process reflects all formal stages involved in the assessment of the Somersby Fields Project, some of which have already been completed by the Department of Planning and the Proponent. The introduction of the Part 3A process post-dated the commencement of environmental studies for the project under Part 4 of the EP&A Act, hence, some of the stages set out below reflect the transitional period prior to the gazettal of Part 3A. Throughout the course of the process, the Proponent has regularly consulted with the Department of Planning regarding the project, particularly as it relates to the provisions of Part 3A of the EP&A Act.



The approvals process is outlined as follows. For stages completed so far, the relevant date is recorded. For the remaining stages beyond the commencement of the exhibition of the *Environmental Assessment*, an estimate of the elapsed weeks is provided as an indication of the likely duration of each subsequent stage.

1 7 April 2005	⇒ Somersby Fields Partnership formally wrote to the then DIPNR seeking Director-General's Requirements for an Environmental Impact Statement – supported by Form A and draft Background Paper.
2 31 May 2005	⇒ A Planning Focus Meeting was convened for all relevant government agencies to attend a briefing about the project (based upon a final Background Paper) and a site inspection.
3 13 July 2005	⇒ DIPNR issued the Director-General's Requirements for the Somersby Fields Project.
4 1 August 2005	⇒ Part 3A of the <i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979</i> accented to by the NSW Parliament and gazetted in Government Gazette. Note: The DIPNR was dissolved in August 2005 and the functions relating to the administration of the EP&A Act were transferred to the Department of Planning.
5 21 November 2005	⇒ Somersby Fields Partnership formally wrote to the Department of Planning lodging its Application for Project Approval (see Appendix 1).
6 6 January 2006	⇒ <i>Environmental Assessment</i> Requirements (Director-General's Requirements) issued by the Director-General of the Department of Planning (see Appendix 2).
7 30 January 2006	⇒ <i>Environmental Assessment</i> lodged with Department of Planning to assess adequacy for exhibition.
8 28 March 2006	⇒ The Department of Planning provided draft comments on the adequacy of the <i>Environmental Assessment</i> (finalised on 28 April 2006).
9 April 2006 to March 2007	⇒ Somersby Fields Partnership acquired a Water Access Licence and commissioned further studies to address comments provided by the Department of Planning and other government agencies arising from the adequacy assessment.



10 May 2007



Finalised *Environmental Assessment* submitted to Department of Planning for exhibition and assessment following receipt of a letter formally stating that the *Environmental Assessment* is adequate for exhibition. Following receipt of the document (hard copies and CDs), the Department of Planning will advertise that the *Environmental Assessment* is available for public review and formally notify relevant government agencies about the documents.

11



Exhibition period for all documentation for review by the community and government agencies.

12



A panel hearing may be convened to enable a range of experts to listen to representations from community members and the Proponent about key issues.

13



The Department of Planning will seek from the Somersby Fields Partnership, a response / clarification about issues raised in the submissions from the community and government agencies.

14



Somersby Fields Partnership will provide responses to the issues raised – and if necessary, submit a revised Statement of Commitments.

15



The Department of Planning will prepare its assessment report based on all documentation submitted by the Proponent, the community, government agencies and the panel of experts, if applicable.

16



Determination by the Minister.

It is noted that the Proponent and R.W. Corkery & Co. Pty. Limited have compiled a database of all local persons interested in receiving Community Newsletters and either a hard copy of the *Environmental Assessment* Summary or a Project CD at the start of the exhibition period.

1.6 MANAGEMENT OF INVESTIGATIONS

The preparation of this document has involved a study team managed by Mr Rob Corkery, M.Appl.Sc., B.Sc (Hons), Principal of R.W. Corkery & Co Pty. Limited, assisted by Mr Alex Irwin, B.Sc (Hons), Environmental Scientist with the same company.



On behalf of the Proponent, Directors Mr John Lockett, B.Eng ((Chemical and Fuel) (Hons)), provided technical information on the project, Mr Geoff Kells, M. Econ, B Com (Hons), provided an economic assessment of the project and Mr Mike Hoskins, A.P.I., coordinated the community consultation undertaken for the project. All members of the Somersby Fields Partnership assisted with finalising the document.

Strong emphasis has been placed upon a multi-disciplinary team approach to the design of the project, the description of the existing environment and impact assessment. The Proponent, through the following specialist consultancies (and the principal authors), commissioned a wide range of specific studies.

- Cardno Willing Pty Ltd
(Surface Water Assessment)
 - *Mr John Tilley, MIE Aust, Dip. CE.*
- RCA Australia (Groundwater Assessment)
 - *Ms Fiona Robinson, BE(Env) (Hons), M.Eng.*
- Heggies Pty Ltd
(Air Quality, Health and Noise Assessments)
 - *Air Quality - Mr Damon Roddis, B.Sc (Hons).*
 - *Health – Mr Nathan Redfern, B.Sc, B.A., PG.Dip.Hlth.Sc, M.Sc.Tech.*
 - *Noise - Mr Dick Godson, B.Sc. (Eng), MSc (Eng).*
- Robert Payne - Ecological Surveys and Management (Flora Assessment)
 - *Mr Robert Payne, M.NR, M.L, B.A.*
- Countrywide Ecological Service (Fauna Assessment)
 - *Dr Leong Lim, PhD, M.Sc (Hons), B.Sc, BLaws.*
- Cardno (NSW) Pty Ltd (Transport and Traffic Assessment)
 - *Mr Paul Davidson MIE Aust, CP Eng., B.E. (Civil), MEngSc (Transport).*
- Key Insights Pty Ltd (Social Impact Assessment)
 - *Ms Ellen Davis-Meehan, B.Ed., M.Ed. Studies.*
- Archaeological Surveys & Reports Pty Ltd (Aboriginal Heritage Assessment)
 - *Mr John Appleton, BA (Hons).*
- Geoff Cunningham Natural Resource Consultants Pty Ltd
(Soils and Land Capability)
 - *Mr Geoff Cunningham, B.Sc (Hons).*

The Proponent also commissioned Anne Clements & Associates Pty Ltd, specialist flora and rehabilitation consultants, to assist in the development of a suitable rehabilitation program and procedures for the Project Site, particularly given the long term commitment to progressively re-establish up to 18.7ha of native vegetation on the Project Site.

