



Appendix III.iv

THE HON PETER MCGAURAN MP

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Ms Beverley and Mr Ken Walker
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Dear Ms and Mr Walker

Thank you for your e-mail of 24 May 2004 concerning the possibility of ecological damage to the Venus Bay area by the disturbance of acid sulfate soils through building development.

As you are no doubt aware, planning approvals for such developments are primarily a matter for Local Government. I note that the South Gippsland Shire Council has received the report "Strategic Assessment of Coastal Acid Sulfate Soils in Victoria" carried out by the Centre for Land Protection Research of the Victorian Department of Primary Industries with some assistance from the CSIRO.

During a meeting in October 2003, the Council stated that if a development application were lodged with Council it would be referred to the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment and Department of Primary Industry for assessment. It would then be a matter for the developer to deal with issues relating to acid sulfate soils.

The Australian Government is keenly aware of how important it is to accurately and systematically map acid sulfate soils. This allows danger zones to be targeted and provides the necessary information to resource managers in local councils to identify those areas where development is either best avoided or where the soil would require special treatment to allow development to proceed.

Acid sulfate risk mapping has already been carried out in southern Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria, however, from a national perspective large gaps still remain. These information gaps are being addressed by a national risk mapping of acid sulfate soils being carried out by a CSIRO Land and Water team under the auspices of the National Committee for Acid Sulfate Soils (NatCASS).

The project is funded by the National Land and Water Resources Audit 2 through the National Heritage Trust, and is expected to be completed by May 2005. This Audit precedes and complements a number of other initiatives such as the development of national catchment-based hazard and risk assessment methods, national standards of assessment and national best practice codes for selected industries.