

FAQS

ENGIE

HAZELWOOD POWER STATION & MINE

PONDAGE

Why are you lowering the water level in the Hazelwood Pondage a further 1.7 metres?

The Hazelwood Cooling Pond (HCP) has been temporarily closed since early June, 2018 when a preliminary report from independent dam consultants raised serious concerns about the stability of the dam walls and the resultant safety concerns for the community, should the walls fail. Action to mitigate the risk by reducing the pressure on the dam walls started immediately by gradually lowering the water level by one metre. The final report from the consultants has been received and it recommends lowering the water level by a further 1.7 metres.

How long will this take and will the Pondage reopen after it reaches that level?

It will take approximately four months to lower the water level a further 1.7 metres. At that point, we will reassess the situation and make a decision on the future of the Pondage.

Why can't you just repair the walls so the community will have the benefit for a few more years?

The future of the Pondage has been the subject of extensive stakeholder engagement. We have been open and transparent in saying our preferred option is to use the water from this former operational asset to assist in filling the Mine pit void.

The current issues with the dam walls and the necessity to partially drain the Hazelwood Cooling Pond has required us to release the water to the environment - not into the Mine as planned.

As part of our mining licence and approved 2017 Mine Work Plan Variation, we are required to remediate and rehabilitate the Pondage as part of our closure activities. We are now assessing our options for commencing earlier than planned the rehabilitation of the Hazelwood Cooling Pond.

To repair the walls of the dam to make them safe and stable is an extensive, complex engineering exercise and would cost tens of millions of dollars. We believe it makes more sense at this stage of the Hazelwood Rehabilitation project to put this investment towards rehabilitation of the Pondage.

Could the dam walls fail before the water level is dropped by a further 1.7 metres?

Dropping the water level in the Pondage by one metre in June this year has significantly reduced the likelihood of the dam walls failing. Dropping the water level by a further 1.7 metres will fully mitigate the risk. We continue our daily inspections and our early warning systems remain operational. Our Trigger Action Response Plan within the Dam Emergency Response Plan has also been updated.

What happens to the exposed areas of the Pondage once the water level drops even further?

We have commenced early studies into interim rehabilitation options available to stabilise the newly exposed beach areas arising from the lowering of the Pondage level. We anticipate that approximately 100 hectares of new beaching will be exposed. We will look at options for stabilising these areas to avoid dust, erosion and the potential for odour by mulching or grassing the areas. This will be an interim measure until final rehabilitation designs are completed, approved and works commence. We estimate this could take up to two years of consultation to arrive at an approved final rehabilitation end state.





Will there be any problems with dust or odours from the exposed areas around the Pondage?

We anticipate that approximately 100 hectares of new beaching will be exposed within the footprint of the Pondage. We will look at options for stabilising these areas to avoid dust, erosion and the potential for odour by mulching or grassing the areas. This will be an interim measure until final rehabilitation designs are completed, approved and works commence.

Will there be any contaminants in the exposed soil?

ENGIE has completed an initial screening of the sediments within the HCP, with the results of the assessment indicating that surface water and sediment quality within the HCP would have limited, if any, impacts on potential beneficial uses of land or water. It is considered unlikely that the future beneficial use of the Site for recreational open space or agricultural grazing would be impacted. The HCP will be subject to further investigations as planning for final rehabilitation is commenced later this year (2018) and through 2019 as a final landform is determined and design works initiated.

What will the impact be on Eel Hole Creek with this additional water flow?

ENGIE Hazelwood's EPA licence allows 75 megalitres of Pondage water per day to be released into the Eel Hole Creek and Morwell River. In June this year, the EPA granted permission for up to 300 megalitres a day to be released, to allow a drop in the water level by one metre. We will now seek approval from the EPA for a licence amendment to release the additional water into Eel Hole Creek to enable us to lower the Pondage by a further 1.7 metres.

Our monitoring of the discharges from the previous lowering event and its impacts on the lower sections of Eel Hole Creek and Morwell River indicated negligible impacts on the waterways. The water quality of the discharge from the HCP remained within licence conditions during the entire period of increased discharge rate.

We remain committed to engaging with property owners located up and downstream of Eel Hole Creek.

What will happen to the barramundi?

As we understand from Fisheries Victoria, the barramundi were relocated to the hot water channel which is a 30-hectare weir within the Pondage. Fishing is still permitted from the shoreline by Gippsland Water.