9. CONCLUSION

OGNZL is seeking all necessary approvals from the EPA under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 to enable the construction, operation, maintenance, and, ultimately, the closure of the WNP.

9.1 MEETING THE PURPOSE OF THE ACT

The purpose of the Fast-track Approvals Act is:

> *to facilitate the delivery of infrastructure and development projects with significant regional or national benefits*.

The WNP is, without doubt, a project that will deliver very significant regional and national benefits.

Waihi is an established mining town, and the proposed WNP will enable the continuation and expansion of the range of employment, economic, and other benefits that mining brings. The project is of such a scale that its economic benefits will extend beyond the Waikato Region to New Zealand as a whole – demonstrably achieving the purpose of the Act. These benefits have been quantified by Eaqub (2025), as summarised in Section 6.3.1 of this report and provided in **Part B** of these application documents.

The project's benefits will also see terrestrial and riparian restoration, enhancement planting, and weed and pest control generating meaningful ecological improvements within the Waikato Region, facilitating a net gain in ecological values. The ecological benefits of the WNP have been assessed and quantified by a range of ecological experts, as summarised in Section 6.6 of this report, and demonstrated in the technical assessments provided in **Part B** of this application.

Furthermore, OGNZL's proposed Waihi North Biodiversity Project represents an opportunity to provide major long term (inter-generational) ecological benefits to the wider Coromandel Forest Park area. The Waihi North Biodiversity Project is not required to mitigate or offset any adverse effects associated with the project but will involve expenditure of approximately $8.4 million on predator control and habitat enhancement within an area of up to 18,870 ha over a 10 year term.

9.2 MANAGING THE EFFECTS OF THE PROJECT

While the benefits of mining are significant, and the WNP clearly meets the purpose of the Act, the environmental effects of the project need to be managed appropriately. The WNP is a large and multi-faceted project, and its actual and potential effects have been subject to detailed scrutiny from a range of leading technical experts. Through that process, and in

consultation with affected and interested stakeholders, the project has been refined to minimise adverse effects on the physical environment, and to maximise positive effects.

The cultural effects of the activities have addressed with tangata whenua through hui, meetings and the CVA / CIA process described in Section 5, noting that this engagement is ongoing, and is projected to continue through the life of the project.

An assessment of all potential effects on the environment resulting from the proposed WNP activities is provided in Section 6 of this document, as well as in the various technical assessments commissioned by OGNZL (provided in **Part B** to these application documents). Succinct summaries are provided below.

9.2.1 Managing Effects Within the Coromandel Forest Park

The Wharekirauponga orebody is located beneath the Coromandel Forest Park. The WNP has been designed so that mining of the orebody will be almost entirely a subsurface activity, with activities on the surface within the Coromandel Forest Park limited to:

- Up to four ventilation evasé, requiring minimal vegetation clearance;
- An expansion of OGNZL's targeted exploration and investigation drilling programme;
- Surface water monitoring activities;
- Episodic surface vibration due to blasting within the mine; and
- The positive effects which manifest as a result of the Waihi North Biodiversity Project.

No high value land will be disturbed.

The effects associated with the establishment and operation of the ventilation raise and drill sites will be small and localised. The impacts of the ventilation raise and drill sites will be similar to those associated with OGNZL's currently consented exploration drilling sites in this area, all of which are managed effectively in accordance with a range of conditions imposed by the Department of Conservation under existing access agreements. It is proposed that these proven methods will be applied to the WNP and which are reflected in many of the proposed conditions, provided in **Part D** of these application documents.

Based on the detailed work undertaken for OGNZL, and presented in Section 6.6.1.1 of this document, the Coromandel population of Archey's frog is estimated to be between 8 – 25 million adults. This is substantially larger than the previously assumed national population size, of between 5,000 – 20,000 adults. When mining commences there is a low (but difficult to empirically quantify) risk that the project will generate residual adverse effects on Archey's frogs within the 314-ha area exposed to vibrations greater than 2 mm/s, or the much smaller area exposed to ventilation discharges. These areas represent a very small

proportion of the total available habitat, while OGNZL is proposing a range of measures to minimise potential effects, supported by extensive predator and pest control. Together these measures are intended to provide an overall net benefit to the Archey's frog population.

The WUG and WUG Dual Tunnels are located beneath Department of Conservation administered land, and a number of 'Natural State Water Bodies' identified in the Regional Plan, and natural wetlands, are located above the proposed underground mining area. In light of the 'natural state' classification, groundwater-surface water interaction has been carefully considered. Central to these considerations, OGNZL is proffering a set of conditions, and a supporting management plan, which require implementation of a comprehensive water management and monitoring regime that is aimed at preventing any measurable changes to natural flow regimes that might potentially result from dewatering the ore drive development and mining stopes of the WUG. Various technical assessments have been provided by New Zealand and international based experts that detail the standard, proven, and proposed methodologies for managing potential dewatering effects, as provided in **Part B** to these application documents.

9.2.2 Managing Effects in and Around Waihi

Outside the Coromandel Forest Park, there will be some visual, noise and vibration effects associated with the project at various stages of its development. However, OGNZL is proposing that the activities be undertaken in accordance with conditions that limit the potential for adverse effects on the community and which have been used to successfully manage OGNZL's existing mining operations at Waihi over many years.

The development and design of the WNP has been carefully considered to minimise effects on freshwater values.

The Willows SFA will have a comprehensive water management system, which will collect and pump all runoff and seepage from areas of the site containing PAF rock to the WTP for treatment. With respect to the WTP discharge, repeated monitoring of the ecological values of the Ohinemuri River shows that the ecosystem has remained stable and persistent since the commencement of OGNZL's Waihi operations some 30 years ago. There is no evidence that the treated water discharge from the Waihi operations has caused any adverse effects on the ecological values of the Ohinemuri River. Accordingly, maintaining the same receiving water quality standards will mean that the ecological values of the Ohinemuri River will continue to be protected.

The NRS and TSF3 have been designed, and will be constructed and operated, in a manner consistent with that which currently occurs at OGNZL's existing Waihi facilities. The existing

aspects of design and operation have been used to successfully manage and monitor potential effects. This includes a range of design elements to encapsulate and / or neutralise PAF material, and to contain, collect and treat seepage and runoff from PAF rock and tailings.

With respect to freshwater ecology, the proposed infrastructure has been located to avoid, to the greatest extent practicable, and otherwise minimise, effects on water bodies (including wetlands). Importantly however, various measures have been proposed, including extensive riparian restoration planting and the development of a new ecological functioning stream channel, and wetland enhancement, such that there will be no net loss of ecological values.

Both native and exotic vegetation will be removed by the WNP, including the permanent removal of 8.3 ha from the 57-ha southern fragment of SNA 166. This will be fully offset to deliver no net loss of biodiversity values by providing 17.5 ha of new planting on adjacent land. The effects of removing other vegetation will also be offset by replanting elsewhere in and around the project footprint. A range of ecological management provisions (set out in the ELMP included in **Part H** to these application documents) will also be prepared and implemented by suitably qualified and experienced ecologists.

9.2.3 Alignment with the Statutory Framework

The WNP aligns well with the overall management intentions specified in the relevant national, regional and district planning documents, as set out in detail in Section 8 of this document.

9.2.4 Consultation

OGNZL has consulted extensively with interested / potentially affected parties, the wider community, and relevant regulatory authorities with respect to the WNP. This consultation has informed the various environmental assessments and will continue throughout the fast-track decision making process and during the subsequent operation of the WNP.

9.2.5 Concluding Statement

OGNZL is proud to present and seek approval for an innovative project that will deliver very significant regional and national benefits, while effectively managing those unavoidable environmental effects.

The overall result is that Waihi will continue to prosper, there will be minimal disruption to residents, and long term, inter-generational ecological benefits will be realised.