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3. GOVERNMENT APPROVALS

3.1 Introduction

As the inspirational writer Paulo Coelho (1988, p. 22) said in his famous book *The Alchemist*, if you really desire to achieve something, the entire universe mysteriously unfolds to help you achieve it. This was the case for the process of gaining approvals for the CO2CRC Otway Project, and what was initially challenging gradually started to be resolved, as people realised the importance of this Project to the State of Victoria. As a result of lateral thinking on the regulators' part and the perseverance of project facilitators in the Victorian Government coupled with a close working relationship with the participating scientists and engineers, this Project became a reality. The context of why this Project was a "Project of State Significance" is that Victoria hosts a significant proportion of the world's brown coal resources (430 billion t). However, brown coal produces large quantities of carbon dioxide in the energy generation process (DPI 2010, p. 1). For Victoria to continue to enjoy the benefits of this vast resource, it is vital that the issue of greenhouse gas emissions

from brown coal be addressed as Australia moves towards a low carbon economy.

The Otway Project was initiated by CO2CRC in 2004, with preliminary discussions during that year with individual landowners and officers of the Moyne Shire. The first community meeting was held in February 2006 with approximately 70 people in attendance. Because CO2CRC had purchased the rights to the surrounding petroleum tenements, it had full access to all prior petroleum-related work and this was used as the basis for the preliminary investigations of the site. Initial work at the site commenced in mid-2006 with the flow testing of the Buttress-1 well, approved by the Department of Primary Industries (DPI). The Buttress-1 well was planned to serve as the CO₂ source for the Project, which gives this Project a unique advantage over most other research and demonstration projects throughout the world. In August 2006, the State authorities that had an interest in regulating this Project liaised with each other in developing the process for approving this "first of a kind" project. The key authorities involved at this stage were the Environment Protection Authority (EPA), Southern Rural Water (SRW) and DPI. Throughout this period there were ongoing discussions between CO2CRC management and officers of DPI, to