

Executive summary

What is proposed?

The NSW Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) proposes to construct a bypass of the village of Woomargama located on the Hume Highway approximately 50 kilometres north of Albury, 15 kilometres south of Holbrook and approximately 95 kilometres south-east of Wagga Wagga. The project would include the construction of a new dual carriageway section of the Hume Highway from approximately 7.5 kilometres north of the village to three kilometres south of the village, encompassing a total length of approximately nine kilometres.

The project would include:

- Approximately nine kilometres of dual carriageway.
- An at-grade intersection with the existing Hume Highway approximately 6.5 kilometres north of Woomargama village.
- Bridges over Sandy Creek.
- Six deep cuttings.
- Bridges over Mountain Creek.
- An at-grade intersection with the existing Hume Highway approximately two kilometres south of Woomargama village.
- An upgrade to the at-grade intersection at Fairbairn Road.

For more details on the project see Chapters 5 and 6.

Why is it needed?

There is an identified strategic need for the Hume Highway, the main freight and travel corridor between Sydney and Melbourne, to provide improved capacity, performance and efficiency. Construction of the project would contribute to meeting this need for the Hume Highway. The project is needed to complete the provision of dual carriageway conditions between Sydney and Melbourne along the length of the Hume Highway. The project is also needed to improve safety on the highway and in the village of Woomargama (see Section 3.2.3).

For more details on the need and strategic justification for the project see Chapters 3 and 12.

What alternatives were considered?

Initially, the RTA investigated three broad options for the provision of a dual carriageway bypass at Woomargama: Option A (generally following the existing Hume Highway alignment), Option B (to the west of Woomargama and traversing the slopes of Mount McKenzie) and Option C (to the west of Woomargama between Option B and the existing Hume Highway). Through design review and a value management workshop involving key stakeholders and community representatives, one of these options (Option C) was not developed further. The short-listed options (Option A and Option B) were further assessed. Based on the findings of preliminary technical investigations, design considerations and further consultation, including a supplementary workshop, Option B was recommended to progress.

For more details of the alternatives considered and the options assessment process see Chapter 4.

What option was chosen, and why?

Option B was preferred over Option A because:

- It has the least impact on flora and fauna and flooding.
- It has the least impact on Aboriginal cultural and archaeological sites.
- It enables development of Woomargama in line with the *Woomargama Vision 2018* (Greater Hume Shire Council 2008).
- It offers a better value for money solution.
- It provides a better overall design standard.
- It enables access to the village of Woomargama and the local road network at the northern and southern ends.

For more details of how the preferred option was chosen and why, see Chapter 4.

Following announcement of the preferred option, detailed technical investigations were undertaken to assess the potential impacts of the project. These investigations included flora and fauna, Aboriginal heritage, hydrology, noise and vibration, social and economic, traffic and transport, non-Aboriginal heritage, visual amenity and landscape, and contamination. The results of these studies informed the refinement of the concept design to further minimise potential impacts.

What are the main beneficial outcomes expected?

- Travel time savings and consistent driving conditions.
- Predicted decrease in crash rate on the project in comparison to single carriageway conditions.
- Improved performance (level of service) of the project and existing highway compared to the existing highway with no project.
- Improved amenity in the village of Woomargama.
- Safety benefits through reduced traffic in the village and reduced conflict between local and through traffic.
- Improved air quality in the village of Woomargama.
- Decreased traffic noise for residents in Woomargama village.
- Positive road-user benefits at a broader scale derived from a long-term reduction in road user and accident costs, provision of consistent driving conditions and travel time saving benefits.
- Improved capacity and performance of the Hume Highway, thus bringing substantial long-term national and state-wide economic benefits by facilitating the enhanced trade of goods and services.

What are the main adverse outcomes expected?

- Loss of eight hectares of vegetation and habitat, including native vegetation and an endangered ecological community, and fragmentation of habitat. However, no significant impact on any threatened species or ecological community is predicted.
- Of the 25 Aboriginal archaeological sites and four potential archaeological deposits (PADs) identified, 16 sites and two PADs are located wholly or partially within the construction site boundary and would be directly impacted by the project. There would be no direct impact on any identified places of Aboriginal cultural heritage significance.

- Minor surface water and groundwater impacts, including relatively minimal changes to existing flooding conditions and changes to the distribution of flow within the Mountain Creek floodplain both upstream and downstream.
- Increased road traffic noise for some residents on isolated rural properties.
- During construction, some minor, temporary disruptions to the rural lifestyle and community character in Woomargama in the form of land use changes, construction noise impacts and short-term traffic disruptions.
- Some partial property acquisitions to construct the project. This may have some adverse impacts on the landowners.
- Some minor temporary traffic, transport and access impacts during construction.
- Some minor, permanent changes to the local and regional road network.
- During operation, some adverse impacts on the economy of Woomargama. The project would lead to a reduction in passing trade with fewer motorists stopping in Woomargama.
- Direct impact on the Mount Raven Cottage footings site. This site is not listed on any heritage register. It is considered to be of local heritage significance.
- Changes to the visual and landscape environment.

How will the likely consequences be managed?

This environmental assessment examines the likely consequences of the project. As part of this assessment, measures to mitigate and/or manage the impacts have been proposed. The mitigation measures aim to avoid or minimise potential impacts through design in the first instance. Where a potential impact is unable to be mitigated through design, further management measures are outlined.

The environmental, social and economic impacts, and measures to minimise those impacts, are discussed in Chapters 9 and 10. A draft statement of commitments, which lists the outcomes and actions proposed, is provided in Chapter 11.

For more details of how the likely consequences of the project would be managed see Chapters 9, 10 and 11.

How can I comment on the proposal and/or the environmental assessment?

The NSW Department of Planning has made the environmental assessment publicly available for a minimum period of 30 days. During this period, it is available for inspection on the Department of Planning website (www.planning.nsw.gov.au), on the project website (http://www.pb.com.au/humehighwaybypasses/woomargama/public_information.htm), in the Greater Hume Shire Council office (39 Young Street, Holbrook), in the Holbrook Library (Library Court, Holbrook) and in the Department of Planning head office (Bridge Street, Sydney) and the Nature Conservation Council office (Kent Street, Sydney). In Woomargama, the environmental assessment has been made available for inspection at the Woomargama Post Office Hume Highway, Woomargama). The RTA will also be conducting community information sessions and the project information line will be available throughout the exhibition period — 1800 755 767 (toll free).

Any person may make a written submission to the Director-General of the Department of Planning during the exhibition period. Submissions should be made to:

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