1. Introduction

1.1 The project

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 of Wagga Wagga. The project would include the construction of a new dual carriageway section of the Hume Highway from approximately three kilometres south of the village to 7.5 kilometres north of the village, encompassing a total length of approximately nine kilometres.

1.2 Overview

The Hume Highway is the main road freight route between Sydney and Melbourne, carrying over 20 million tonnes of road freight every year. In addition, it is a vital transport link for communities and industries in southern NSW. The total length of the Hume Highway is 807 kilometres from Sydney to Melbourne. Of this, 517 kilometres is in NSW and 290 kilometres is in Victoria. Within Victoria, 100 per cent of the highway is now dual carriageway. Within NSW, dual carriageway conditions exist on approximately 80 per cent of the total length of the highway.

Of the 89 kilometres of the Hume Highway in NSW yet to be duplicated, 67 kilometres is contained within projects currently under construction. These projects include the Sheahan Bridge duplication (at Gundagai), and the Hume Highway duplication between the Sturt Highway junction and Table Top (north of Albury). All of these works are due to be completed by late 2009. Upgrade of the remaining 20 kilometres of single carriageway on the Hume Highway at Tarcutta, Holbrook and Woomargama would result in dual carriageway conditions between Sydney and Melbourne (see Figure 1-1).

The previous Federal Government committed to completion of full duplication of the Hume Highway by 2012. In December 2008, as part of the Nation Building Program, the current Federal Government announced an advance payment of $265 million to be provided to NSW in 2008-09 to accelerate construction of the Hume Highway duplication, including the Woomargama bypass. The Hume Highway duplication and its component sub-projects, including the Woomargama bypass, are included as major projects to be undertaken, requiring Federal funding for completion, in the *State Infrastructure Strategy — New South Wales 2008-09 to 2017-18*.

In accordance with the above, the RTA proposes to construct a dual carriageway highway bypass of Woomargama with the aim to have the project open to the public by the end of 2011. The scope of this project, which is the subject of this environmental assessment, comprises the bypass of approximately 10 kilometres of existing single carriageway highway through the village of Woomargama. For the purposes of the report, the scope of works is referred to as 'the project' or the 'proposed bypass'. The assessment area incorporates the project plus an approximate 200 metre buffer around its centreline, as well as additional areas required for project delivery.

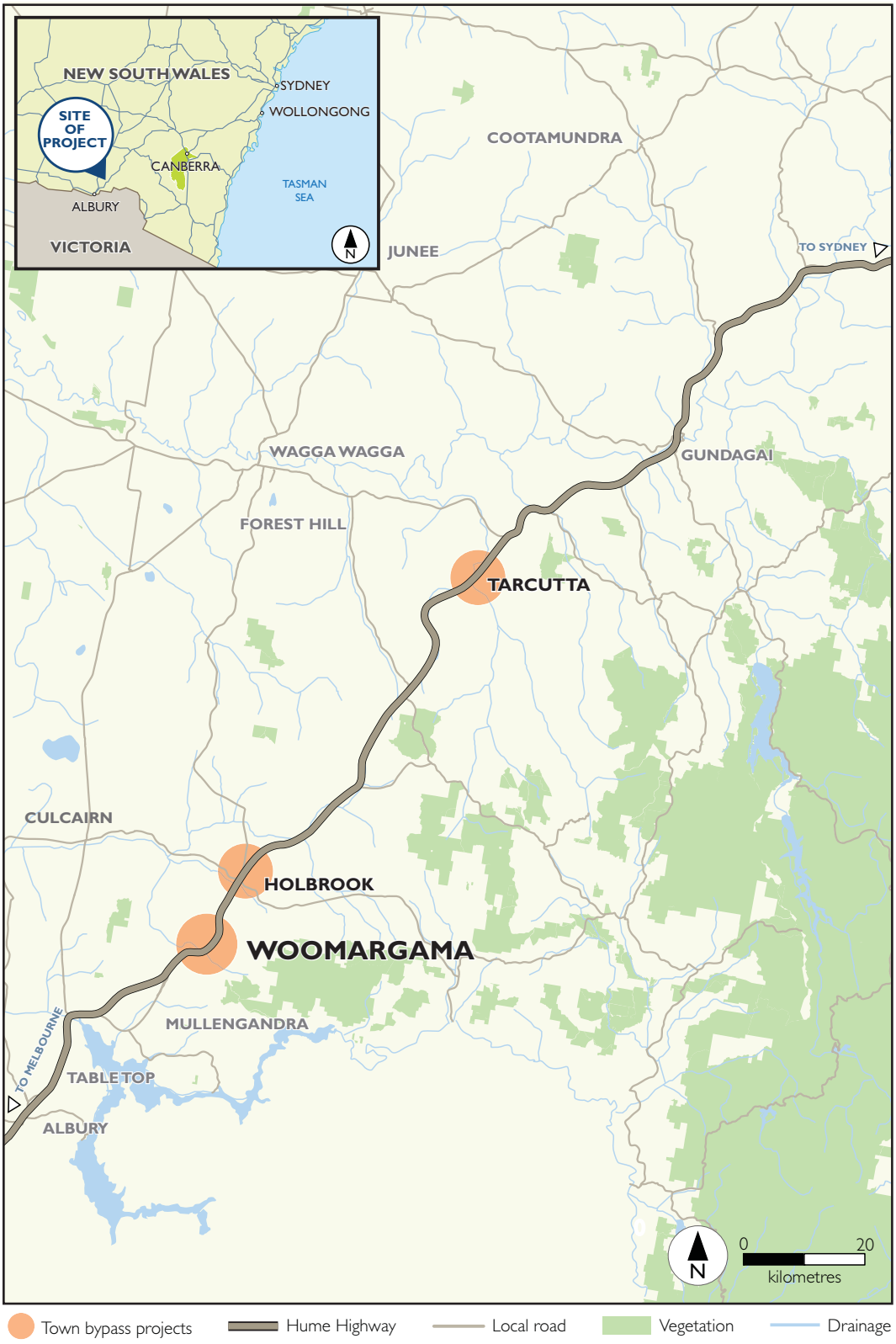

Figure 1-1 **Regional context**

1.3 Project delivery

Design development and construction of the project would be delivered through an alliance (the Hume Highway Woomargama Alliance). An alliance is a project delivery model that involves the collaboration of 'owner' and 'non-owner' participants to deliver the capital phase of a project. All participants share the responsibility for project risks and for achieving project outcomes. A key benefit of an alliance is the early involvement of the construction team in the pre-construction planning phase, which leads to more informed decision making.

The alliance contract for this project was awarded in April 2009. This has enabled progressive design development resulting in a robust concept design for the environmental assessment. The RTA would be responsible for overseeing construction, including inspections, monitoring and auditing works performed by the contractor(s). The benefits of an alliance for the project include:

- Greater flexibility in modifying the design of the project and greater capacity for ongoing changes to be incorporated during construction.
- Additional opportunities for innovation during design and construction to improve results.
- A performance-based contract that rewards alliance partners for outstanding performance where it is ascertained that the project's targets have been exceeded. However, if a project fails to meet its target, the alliance partners are financially penalised.
- A shared responsibility for managing the project's risks and ensuring that the project is implemented to meet the RTA's and the community's requirements.

1.4 The locality

Woomargama is a small, rural village with a population of approximately 80 residents and a total population of 251 people in the surrounding census district (ABS 2006). It is located on the Hume Highway approximately 50 kilometres north of Albury and 15 kilometres south of Holbrook. The Hume Highway is the main street of Woomargama and has a speed limit of 70 kilometres per hour. Adjacent to the highway, land use through the village is a mixture of residential and commercial.

The village's main residential area is located to the south of, and along, the existing Hume Highway alignment. Further to the north-west of the existing highway, beyond the smaller rural-lifestyle and hobby farm properties that line the highway, are some of the largest rural properties in the area. Mount McKenzie is also located west of, and is clearly visible from, the existing highway.

Businesses in the village of Woomargama include a petrol station, hotel/motel, post office and an earthworks company. In addition, the owners of the large, and some of the smaller, rural properties in the local area, have significant agribusiness enterprises on their properties.

The landform of the area immediately surrounding Woomargama is undulating to hilly, with the village lying at a local low point associated with the floodplain of Mountain Creek (an ephemeral tributary of Billabong Creek) and other creeks. The landscape steepens to Mount McKenzie to the west and Woomargama Gap to the north.

Native vegetation surrounding Woomargama has been extensively cleared. Land in the locality is used primarily for agricultural purposes. Native woodland occurs mostly in the highway road reserve and riparian corridors, although scattered paddock trees are also present.

Figure 1-2 shows the locality of the project.

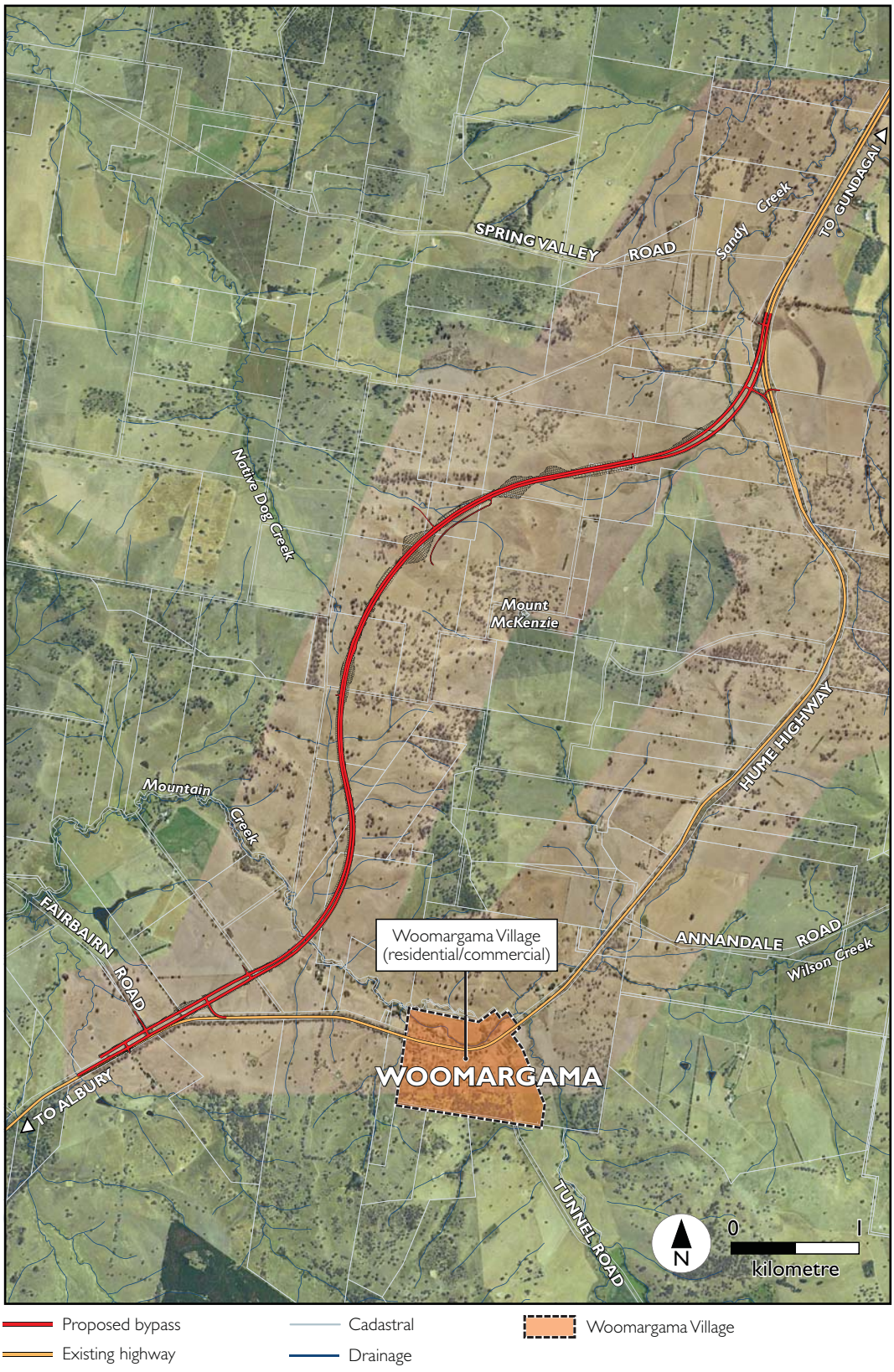

Figure 1-2 **Locality of the project**

1.5 Structure of the environmental assessment

Table 1-1 summarises the structure and content of this environmental assessment.

Table 1-1 Structure and content of this environmental assessment

Chapter	Description
Volume 1 — Environmental assessment	
Statement of validity	
Executive summary	
Chapter 1 Introduction	Outlines the background to, and purpose of, the project, and provides an overview of the project and the structure of this environmental assessment.
Chapter 2 Planning and statutory requirements	Outlines the legislation, planning strategies and policies that apply to the project as well as the planning approvals process.
Chapter 3 Strategic justification	Outlines the strategic need and project need, and the project objectives.
Chapter 4 Project development and alternatives	Describes the process undertaken to assess preliminary route options to determine a preferred route, and describes the development of the concept design (the project).
Chapter 5 Project description	Provides a detailed description of the physical works that make up the project. Provides an overview of the design criteria that apply to the project, and considers the environmental and engineering constraints to the project.
Chapter 6 Construction	Details the construction approach, equipment, resources, labour and ancillary facilities for the project.
Chapter 7 Consultation and stakeholder engagement	Outlines how the community and stakeholders have been, and will continue to be, involved in the development of the project. Summarises the issues raised by the community and stakeholders.
Chapter 8 Environmental risk analysis	Details the risk analysis process by which the potential environmental issues for assessment were identified.
Chapter 9 Assessment of key issues	Describes the potential impact of the project on key issues. Outlines measures proposed to avoid, mitigate or manage those impacts.
Chapter 10 Other environmental issues	Describes the potential impacts of the project on other environmental issues. Outlines measures proposed to avoid, mitigate or manage those impacts.
Chapter 11 Draft statement of commitments	Provides a draft overview of all commitments to avoid, minimise, mitigate, manage, offset or monitor impacts associated with the project.
Chapter 12 Justification and conclusion	Outlines the justification for proceeding with the project. Considers the project objectives, the significance of expected impacts, the objects of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*, the suitability of the site and the public interest.
Chapter 13 References	
Chapter 14 Glossary and abbreviations	
Appendices	

Chapter	Description
Appendix A Minister's Orders	A copy of the Orders gazetted to declare the project a major project and then a critical infrastructure project.
Appendix B Director-General's Requirements	A copy of the Director-General's requirements (DGRs) issued by the Department of Planning and correspondence from the former Department of Environment and Climate Change (now the Department of Environment Climate Change and Water) and the Department of Planning clarifying the DGRs.
Appendix C Director-General's Requirements checklist	Cross-reference to where in the environmental assessment each issue in the DGRs is addressed.
Volume 2 — Technical Papers	
Technical Paper 1	*Flora and Fauna* (Parsons Brinckerhoff Australia Pty Ltd).
Technical Paper 2	*Aboriginal Heritage* (Kelleher Nightingale Consulting Pty Ltd).
Technical Paper 3	*Surface Water* (Parsons Brinckerhoff Australia Pty Ltd).
Technical Paper 4	*Groundwater* (Parsons Brinckerhoff Australia Pty Ltd).
Technical Paper 5	*Noise and Vibration* (Wilkinson Murray Pty Ltd).
Technical Paper 6	*Traffic and Transport* (Parsons Brinckerhoff Australia Pty Ltd).