

1.0 Introduction

The Westlink M7 (formerly called the Western Sydney Orbital) is an existing 39-kilometre-long toll road connecting the M5 Motorway at Prestons, the M4 Motorway at Eastern Creek and The Hills M2 Motorway at Baulkham Hills (the approved project). Transport for NSW (Transport) is seeking a modification to the approval granted for the Westlink M7 (Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) reference number SSI-663) under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (NSW) (EP&A Act). This modification would enable widening of part of the motorway in response to current and projected future traffic growth, and to address reduced motorway efficiency and enhance safety. The proposed modification would enable the construction and operation of an additional lane in both directions within the existing median of the Westlink M7, for approximately 26 kilometres from about 140 metres south of the Kurrajong Road overhead bridge at Prestons (southern end) to the Richmond Road interchange at Oakhurst/Glendenning (northern end), excluding widening through the Westlink M7/M4 Motorway (Light Horse) Interchange. The extent of the approved project and the proposed modification is shown in Figure 1-1.

This report has been prepared to support an application for the modification to the DPE under section 5.25 of the EP&A Act. This report includes:

- An overview of the approved project
- An overview of the proposed modification
- An assessment of the potential environmental and social impacts of the proposed modification
- Identification of environmental mitigation measures required for the proposed modification
- Details of the proposed changes to the Conditions of Approval (CoA)
- Justification for the proposed modification.

The assessment of potential environmental impacts has been undertaken to meet the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) issued for the proposed modification on 10 June 2022. This report has been prepared in the context of the *State significant infrastructure guidelines – preparing a modification report* (Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, 2021a) and is in accordance with the EP&A Act, the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021* (NSW) (EP&A Regulation) and the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Commonwealth) (EPBC Act).

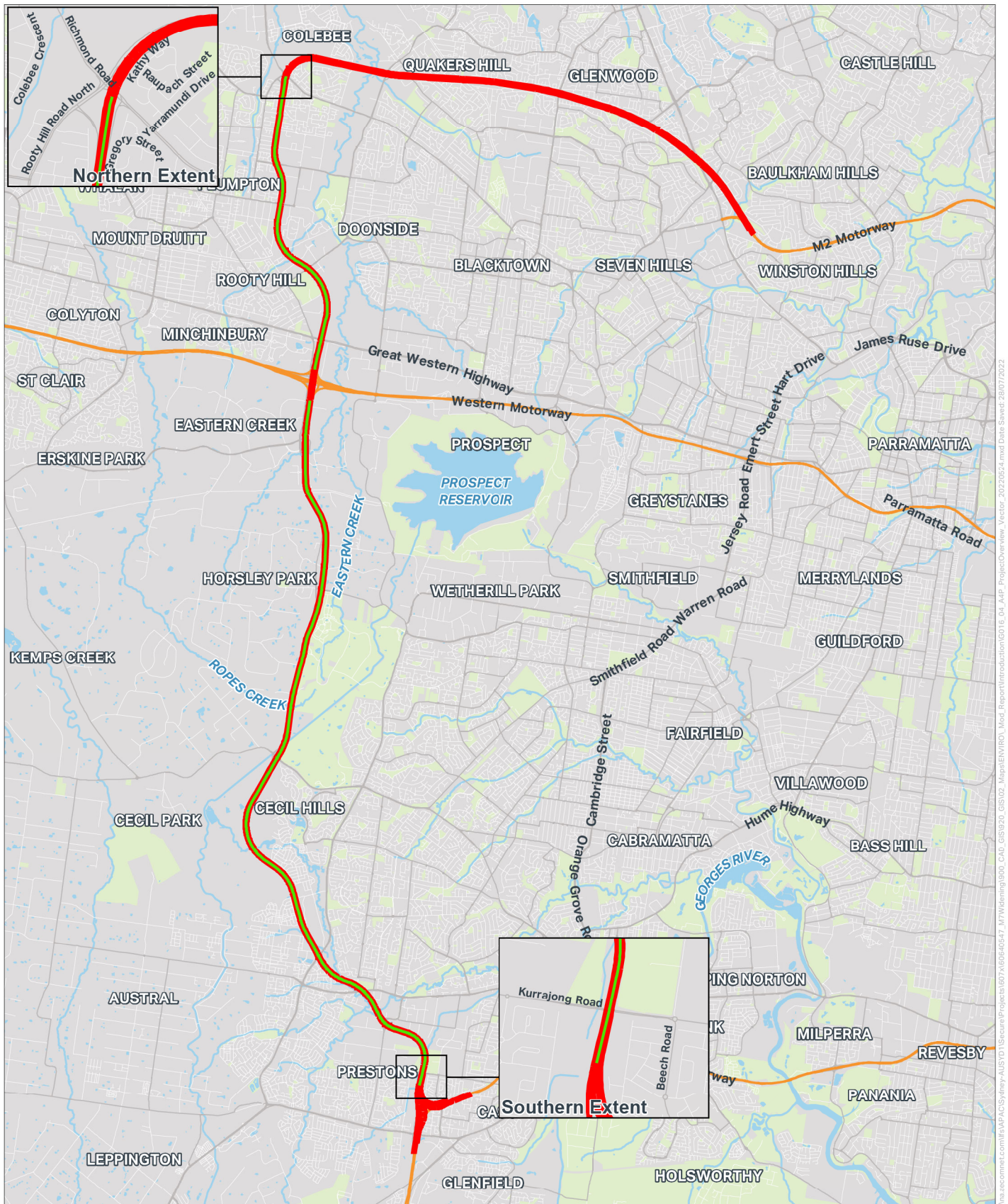


FIGURE 1-1: EXTENT OF THE APPROVED PROJECT AND THE PROPOSED MODIFICATION



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Legend

- Proposed modification
- Approved project
- Motorway
- Primary road

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1.1 Approved project

Approval for the construction and operation of the Westlink M7 project was granted on 28 February 2002 under the then Division 4, Part 5 of the EP&A Act. Specifically, the approval granted consent for the construction and operation of a 39-kilometre-long, four traffic lane motorway with a 15-metre-wide central median, from the F5/M5 Motorway at Prestons in the south to the M2 Motorway at West Baulkham Hills in the north. The potential to use the median for additional traffic lanes or public transport in the future was identified in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the approved project (Roads and Traffic Authority, 2000).

An overview of the key features of the approved project and previous modifications is provided in **Chapter 2** (Approved project).

1.2 The proposed modification

Transport as the proponent for the modification, has submitted a request to the Minister to modify the project planning approval for the Western Sydney Orbital under section 5.25 of the EP&A Act. The approved project (DPE reference number SSI-663) was for the construction and operation of a four-traffic lane motorway, with a wide central median which could be used to provide additional traffic lanes or public transport facilities in the future. Additional capacity is required on this essential road corridor to alleviate current congestion and accommodate future additional vehicle movements. The use of the wide central median for this purpose aligns with the intent of the original EIS and the current transport strategies for the region.

Several options and alternatives were considered for the proposed modification. Widening the Westlink M7 from the M5 Motorway to Richmond Road was selected as the preferred option as it would:

- Deliver significant capacity to the Westlink M7 and prevent the need for a second round of widening works to relieve congestion in this section within a few years' time
- Support key transport objectives and land use plans
- Provide an opportunity for concurrent construction with the approved M12 Motorway which would commence construction around the same time as the proposed modification
- Provide a feasible solution to addressing congestion, relative to widening the full length of the Westlink M7
- Minimise the duration of construction and associated impacts.

The need for the proposed modification is described in full in **Chapter 3** (Need for the modification and strategic context).

The proposed modification would include the following key components:

- Widening of the motorway into the existing median for a length of about 26 kilometres along the Westlink M7, from about 140 metres south of the Kurrajong Road overhead bridge at Prestons (southern end) to the Westlink M7/Richmond Road interchange in Oakhurst/Glendenning (northern end), excluding at the Westlink M7/M4 Motorway (Light Horse) Interchange
- Widening the exit from the Westlink M7 northbound onto the M4 Motorway westbound from one lane to two lanes
- Widening of 43 existing northbound and southbound bridges on the Westlink M7 at 23 locations within the centre median, and on the outside of the bridges on the approach to the M4 Motorway from Old Wallgrove Road
- Upgrades, additions and modifications to noise walls
- Utility works and upgrades to drainage
- Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) installations, adjustments and relocations to cover the new lane configurations, including toll gantry adjustments, relocation of variable speed limit signs (VSLS) and variable message signs (VMS) and new traffic loops to cover the new lanes

- Various construction activities and the use of temporary construction ancillary facilities along and near to the Westlink M7 would also be required.

The proposed modification is described in full in **Chapter 4** (Proposed modification), and the proposed amendments to the CoA are described in **Chapter 8** (Conditions of Approval). Approval of the modification application would allow the construction and operation of the proposed modification as outlined within this report. It is planned that the Westlink M7 interchange with the approved M12 Motorway be constructed at the same time as the proposed modification to minimise disruption and achieve efficiencies during construction. Further detail of the concurrent construction is provided in **Section 4.2.2** of **Chapter 4** (Proposed modification).

1.3 Structure of this report

This report is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 1** Introduction: provides an overview of the approved project and proposed modification, and the purpose of this report
- **Chapter 2** Approved project: provides a description of the approved project
- **Chapter 3** Need for the modification and strategic context: provides an overview of the need for the modification, the strategic planning context, as well as alternatives and options considered
- **Chapter 4** Proposed modification: provides a detailed description of the proposed modification
- **Chapter 5** Statutory context: outlines the statutory assessment requirements and the steps in the assessment and approval process
- **Chapter 6** Consultation: outlines the consultation and engagement activities undertaken to date with stakeholders and what activities would be carried out in the future
- **Chapter 7** Environmental assessment: identifies the relevant environmental issues, assesses the potential impacts of the proposed modification, and presents environmental mitigation measures in response to those impacts
- **Chapter 8** Conditions of Approval: identifies the CoA that are proposed to be amended or added under the modification
- **Chapter 9** Synthesis of the Modification Report and conclusion: presents a synthesis of the findings of this report, the justification for the proposed modification, and a conclusion.

The report appendices include a SEARs reference table (**Appendix A**) and a consolidated list of the mitigation measures proposed in this report, which would be implemented as part of the modification (**Appendix B**). The appendices also include the technical specialist reports that have been prepared for the modification.