

## Executive summary

### What is proposed?

The NSW Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) proposes to construct a bypass of the town of Holbrook located on the Hume Highway approximately 114 kilometres south of Gundagai and 60 kilometres north of Albury. The project would include the construction of a new dual carriageway section of the Hume Highway from approximately five kilometres to the north of Holbrook to three kilometres south of the town, replacing the six kilometres of single carriageway highway that currently passes through the centre of town.

The project would include:

- Approximately 9.5 kilometres of dual carriageway, including 0.5 kilometres along the existing Hume Highway alignment north of Holbrook, seven kilometres along a new alignment to the west of Holbrook and two kilometres along the existing Hume Highway alignment south of Holbrook.
- A grade-separated interchange with Wagga Wagga Road.
- Twin bridges over Culcairn Road.
- Twin bridges over Ten Mile Creek.
- A grade-separated interchange with the existing Hume Highway, south of Holbrook.

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 town of Holbrook (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 Holbrook: eastern option (Option C), far eastern option (Option B) and western option (Option A). Option A was first announced as the preferred route by the RTA in 1990 following investigations and community consultation for the three route options. In 2007, fresh investigations into the three route options commenced, including community consultation and a preliminary environmental assessment. An options assessment workshop was held in February 2008, involving key stakeholders and community representatives. Option A was reconfirmed as the preferred route.

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

### **What option was chosen, and why?**

Option A was preferred over the Options B and C because:

- It is supported by the majority of the community and the Greater Hume Shire Council.
- It is included in the draft Strategic Land Use Plan for Holbrook, which has influenced a number of planning responses, such as future land use planning and urban sub-division, the need for future residential areas and opportunities and potential increases in commercial and industrial activities.
- It was recommended to move forward to the next stage of planning by the majority of attendees of the options assessment workshop.
- The main environmental concerns for Options B and C, such as potential impacts on Aboriginal cultural heritage were largely difficult to mitigate.
- It has less impact on public facilities (hospital, racecourse, Holbrook Golf Course and sporting complex).

For more details of how and why the project was chosen, 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, surface water and groundwater, 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.
- Predicted decrease in crash rate on the project in comparison to the existing highway.
- Improved performance (level of service) of the project compared to the existing highway with no project.
- Safety benefits through reduced traffic in the town and reduced conflict between local and through traffic.
- Improved air quality in the town of Holbrook.
- Decreased traffic noise for some residents.
- Local economic benefits during construction of the project, creating a positive atmosphere in the town.
- 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 24 hectares of native vegetation and habitat, including about 22 hectares of native vegetation that meets the definition of an endangered ecological community, and fragmentation of habitat. The project is likely to have a significant impact on White Box, Yellow Box, Blakely's Red Gum Woodland and Derived Native Grasslands as listed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation 1999*. Although the design of the project and mitigation measures has reduced the extent of impacts on this community, the residual impact remains significant.
- Of the 13 Aboriginal archaeological sites identified, nine would be wholly or partially impacted by the project. There would be a direct impact on seven places of Aboriginal cultural heritage significance.
- Of the six non-Aboriginal heritage items identified during the site inspection, two would be directly impacted by the project. The project would result in the destruction of the historic artefact scatter and mound (HHI-6) and the partial destruction of the remnant non-operational Culcairn to Holbrook rail line (HHI-7). Both of these items are considered to be of local heritage significance. HHI-6 has the potential to yield archaeological data regarding the extent, condition and significance of the archaeological resource.
- Minor surface water and groundwater impacts, including relatively minimal changes to existing flooding conditions and changes to the distribution of flow within the Ten Mile Creek floodplain both upstream and downstream.
- Increased road traffic noise for some residents.
- During construction, some minor, temporary disruptions to the lifestyle and community character in Holbrook in the form of land use changes, construction noise impacts and short-term traffic disruptions.
- Partial acquisition of some agricultural properties would be required for the project.
- Some minor, temporary traffic, transport and access impacts during construction.
- Some permanent changes to the local and regional road network and property accesses.
- During operation, some adverse impacts on the economy of Holbrook. The project would lead to a reduction in passing trade, with fewer motorists stopping in Holbrook.
- 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 on 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](http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au)), on the project website ([http://www.pb.com.au/humehighwaybypasses/holbrook/public\\_information.htm](http://www.pb.com.au/humehighwaybypasses/holbrook/public_information.htm)), in the Greater Hume Shire Council in Holbrook (39 Young Street, Holbrook), the Department of Planning head office (23-33 Bridge Street, Sydney) and the Nature Conservation Council office (Kent Street, Sydney). In Holbrook, the environmental assessment has been made available for inspection at the Holbrook Local Library (Library Crescent, Holbrook). 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:

Director, Major Infrastructure Assessments  
Department of Planning  
GPO Box 39  
SYDNEY NSW 2001  
Fax: (02) 9228 6355  
Email: [Michael.Young@planning.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Michael.Young@planning.nsw.gov.au)