

## Executive summary

### What is proposed?

The NSW Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) proposes to construct a bypass of the village of Tarcutta located on the Hume Highway approximately 45 kilometres south of Gundagai and 30 kilometres south-east of Wagga Wagga. The project would include the construction of approximately seven kilometres of new dual carriageway from approximately two kilometres north of the village to two kilometres south of the village, encompassing a total length of approximately seven kilometres.

The project would include:

- Approximately seven kilometres of dual carriageway.
- A northern interchange in the vicinity of Mate Street, north of the village.
- Twin bridges over Tarcutta Creek.
- A southern interchange in the vicinity of Humula and Mates Gully roads, south of the village.
- Twin bridges over Keajura Creek.

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 Tarcutta (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 five broad options for the provision of a dual carriageway bypass at Tarcutta: eastern option, far-eastern option, western option, modified western option and central option. Through design review and an options assessment process involving key stakeholders and community representatives, three of these options (far-eastern, modified western and central) were not developed further. The short-listed options (western and eastern) were further assessed and, based on the findings of preliminary technical investigations and design considerations, the western option was recommended to progress. Following further investigation and route refinement to avoid sensitive environmental areas, a revised western option was developed.

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

### What option was chosen, and why?

The revised western option was preferred over the eastern option because:

- It is the shortest route, and therefore, offers a better overall value-for-money solution.
- It is considered safer from a road-user perspective, as the alignment is flatter and straighter with fewer at-grade intersections.
- It has a smaller geometric 'footprint' and minimises the area of land acquisition required.

- It is closer to, and in viewing distance of, the village of Tarcutta, and therefore, provides a mechanism to continue to attract tourists into the village.
- It avoids potentially significant impacts on biodiversity and Aboriginal heritage areas near the intersection of Mates Gully Road and the existing Hume Highway.

For more details of how and why the preferred option 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 biodiversity, Aboriginal heritage, hydrology, noise and vibration, social and economic, traffic and transport, non-Aboriginal heritage, and visual amenity and landscape. 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 of the project and existing highway compared to the existing highway with no bypass.
- Improved amenity in the village of Tarcutta.
- Safety benefits through reduced traffic in the village and reduced conflict between local and through traffic.
- Improved air quality in the village of Tarcutta.
- Decreased traffic noise for some residents.
- Local economic benefits during construction of the project, creating a positive atmosphere in the village.
- Positive road-user benefits at a broader scale derived from a long-term reduction in road user and accident costs, 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 16 hectares of native vegetation and habitat, including native vegetation that meets the definition of an endangered ecological community, and fragmentation of habitat. However, no significant impact on any threatened species or community is predicted.
- Of the 17 Aboriginal archaeological sites identified, 12 are located wholly or partially within the concept design and would be directly impacted by the project. A further three sites are located in proximity to the concept design and may be directly impacted depending on the detailed design of the project. There would be a direct impact on two places of Aboriginal cultural heritage significance.
- Direct impacts on the curtilage of the State Heritage Register listed Hambledon Homestead Complex. As a result of these impacts, non-Aboriginal heritage was identified as an additional key issue for the environmental assessment and has been assessed in more detail.
- Minor surface water and groundwater impacts, including relatively minimal changes to existing flooding conditions and changes to the distribution of flow within the Tarcutta Creek floodplain both upstream and downstream.
- Increased road traffic noise for some residents.

- During construction, some minor, temporary disruptions to the rural lifestyle and community character in Tarcutta 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 Tarcutta. The project would lead to a reduction in passing trade with fewer motorists stopping in Tarcutta.
- 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 remove, 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](http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au)), on the project website ([http://www.pb.com.au/humehighwaybypasses/tarcutta/public\\_information.htm](http://www.pb.com.au/humehighwaybypasses/tarcutta/public_information.htm)), in the Wagga Wagga City Council office (Corner Baylis and Morrow streets, Wagga Wagga), the Department of Planning head office (Bridge Street, Sydney) and the Nature Conservation Council office (Kent Street, Sydney). In Tarcutta, the environmental assessment has been made available for inspection at the Post Office and the Halfway Café (Sydney Street, Tarcutta). 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: [david.rohloff@planning.nsw.gov.au](mailto:david.rohloff@planning.nsw.gov.au)

