

7. Consultation and stakeholder engagement

This chapter summarises the community and stakeholder involvement activities and feedback received during the development of the project to date.

DGRs	Where addressed
Consultation:	
Undertake an appropriate and justified level of consultation with relevant parties during preparation of the environmental assessment, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local, State or Commonwealth government authorities and service providers, including the Department of Environment and Climate Change, the Department of Primary Industries, the Department of Water and Energy, and Wagga Wagga City Council. Specialist interest groups, including Local Aboriginal Councils. The public, including affected landowners. 	Sections 4.1, 7.3, 7.4
The environmental assessment must describe the consultation process, document all community consultation undertaken to date and identify the issues raised (including where these have been addressed in the environmental assessment).	Chapter 7

7.1 Consultation objectives and strategies

A community consultation and stakeholder engagement plan ('communications plan') was developed and implemented for the project to identify key objectives and outcomes of consultation activities with the community, stakeholders and government agencies.

The project has incorporated consultation with directly and indirectly affected adjacent landowners, interested local and regional individuals and the wider Tarcutta community. Consultation also included local groups and state government agencies, including:

- Federal Government, state and local elected representatives and government authorities.
- Local community groups, such as progress organisations, and flooding and agricultural groups.
- Aboriginal Land Councils and individuals, including Wagga Wagga Local Aboriginal Land Council.

7.2 Consultation strategy

The communications plan was developed at the commencement of the preliminary environmental assessment phase and has been revised throughout the development of the environmental assessment.

The communications strategy was developed to support the principal objective of community consultation: to keep stakeholders updated and involved in the project during each stage of its development. The key objectives of the communications plan were to:

- Identify local and regional stakeholders.
- Understand stakeholder and community issues, values and concerns related to the project.
- Create an understanding of the project within the local community.

- Keep stakeholders well-informed and involved during each stage of the project.
- Provide opportunities for community input.
- Identify appropriate communication tools (eg advertisements, frequently asked questions (FAQ), newsletters) and when to implement them.
- Incorporate stakeholder and community issues into the development of the concept design and environmental assessment, and identify means of avoiding or mitigating impacts.
- Assist stakeholders and the community in understanding the results of the concept design and environmental assessment.
- Communicate the outcomes likely to result from the project such increased public safety and amenity in the village.

Consultation was undertaken in accordance with the *Guidelines for Major Project Community Consultation* (Department of Planning 2007).

7.3 Community and stakeholder consultation activities

A wide range of communication tools were employed to ensure that the community and stakeholder were consulted using a method of communication that best suited them. Table 7-1 provides a summary of the activities conducted to date, and the stakeholder and community groups involved.

Table 7-1 Summary of community and stakeholder consultation activities

Consultation activity	Government authorities	Community groups	Landowners	Interested individuals	Wider community
Aboriginal focus group meetings				✓	
Meetings with local and state authorities	✓				
Individual landowner meetings			✓		
Newsletters	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
FAQ documents		✓	✓	✓	✓
Advertisements		✓	✓	✓	✓
Public displays		✓	✓	✓	✓
Information sessions		✓	✓	✓	✓
Options assessment workshops	✓				
1800 project information line		✓	✓	✓	✓
Website	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

The following sections describe in more detail the activities undertaken to inform the community and stakeholders about the project.

7.3.1 *Aboriginal focus group meetings*

The Aboriginal community has been involved in the assessment of the project's impact on Aboriginal archaeological and cultural heritage. In order to identify Aboriginal stakeholders, notifications and advertisements were published in regional and local newspapers. Aboriginal land councils and individuals were invited to register their interest for involvement in the assessment of Aboriginal archaeology and cultural heritage. Thirty-two Aboriginal stakeholders were registered to the project. Aboriginal stakeholder engagement was carried out in accordance with the *Draft Guidelines for Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment and Community Consultation* (DEC 2005a) and the *RTA Procedure for Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Consultation and Investigation* (RTA 2008d) (the Procedure).

Aboriginal stakeholders were invited to participate in Aboriginal focus group (AFG) meetings. AFG meetings include the involvement of registered Aboriginal stakeholders, including members from the Wagga Wagga Local Aboriginal Land Council, Wagga Wagga Aboriginal Elders Inc, Waagan Waagan Project Group, individuals and the Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC) (now the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW)).

The first AFG meeting was held on 20 February 2008 to discuss the results of the preliminary archaeological assessment and Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment undertaken for the project's preliminary environmental assessment.

A second AFG meeting was held on 11 February 2009. Twenty-one Aboriginal stakeholders attended the meeting to discuss the results of the site survey and the areas proposed for test excavation. The methodology for detailed survey was presented and Aboriginal stakeholders were given an opportunity to provide comment on the methodology.

Following detailed site survey, archaeological test excavation and cultural heritage surveys, the draft Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report (CHAR) was prepared for the project. The draft CHAR outlined the results of the site survey, test excavations and provided an assessment of impacts and proposed mitigation for archaeological sites and cultural places (see Section 9.2). The draft CHAR was provided to the Aboriginal stakeholders for review and comment. During the review and comment period, a third AFG meeting was held on 18 June 2009.

7.3.2 *Stakeholder and agency consultation*

Consultation with stakeholders and government agencies has been undertaken throughout project development through regular correspondence and their involvement in workshops and meetings.

Consultation with government agencies was conducted to help identify the appropriate approval pathways, discuss environmental constraints and opportunities and identify key issues for the project. Regular correspondence and meetings were held with Wagga Wagga City Council, DECC (now DECCW), the Department of Lands, Ministry of Transport, the Department of Water and Energy (DWE) (now part of DECCW), the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) (now the Department of Industry and Investment) and the Department of Planning.

The environmental risk assessment process carried out as part of the environmental assessment (see Section 8.3) identified non-Aboriginal heritage as an additional key environmental issue for the project due to the likely impacts on a State Heritage Register listed

item. The Department of Planning has been consulted on the appropriate assessment approach to be included in the environmental assessment for this additional key issue.

7.3.3 *Adjacent landowner meetings*

Targeted consultation was initiated with landowners adjacent to the project in November 2007. These meetings sought to introduce the project team, transfer local knowledge and information, and provide landowners with information about the environmental assessment process. Regular landowner meetings have occurred throughout the environmental assessment process to:

- Provide affected landowners with up-to-date information about the project.
- Seek advice and comment on design options.
- Discuss implications of the design as they relate to particular properties.

Regular consultation with affected landowners would continue through detailed design and construction.

7.3.4 *Newsletters*

Two community update newsletters were produced and distributed during the preliminary environmental assessment phase outlining the development of the project. Another newsletter was distributed when the environmental assessment was placed on public display for comment. The newsletters were distributed via Australia Post's unaddressed mailing system to recipients in the Tarcutta postcode (2652). The newsletters included:

- Newsletter 1 — project continuation and study team introduction (February 2008).
- Newsletter 2 — announcement of the preferred route (September 2008).
- Newsletter 3 — announcement of the exhibition of the environmental assessment and locations to view the report (August 2009).

7.3.5 *Advertising in local newspapers*

Advertisements were placed in the *Daily Advertiser* and the *Monthly Tarcutta Industry Newsletter* in February and October 2008, and June 2009. Advertisements sought to inform the community and stakeholders of project development, and notify them of public displays and community information sessions being held.

7.3.6 *Public displays*

The *Hume Highway Upgrade Tarcutta Bypass: Preliminary Environmental Assessment* (RTA 2008a) was placed on public display from 29 September to 28 November 2008. The display provided an opportunity for the public to view the preferred route (refer Section 4.1) and provide feedback to the project team.

Posters and community updates of the preferred route and copies of the preliminary environmental assessment were displayed at the Tarcutta Post Office, Tarcutta Mobil Service Centre and Wagga Wagga City Council offices as well as the Henty Field Days on 23, 24 and 25 September 2008.

An RTA display announcing the exhibition of the environmental assessment for public comment has been made available at the Tarcutta Halfway Café, Post Office and Wagga Wagga City Council offices. Copies of the environmental assessment have also been provided at these locations.

7.3.7 *Community information sessions*

A community information session was held at the Tarcutta RSL and Citizens Club on 25 February 2008. The session introduced the project team, outlined the preliminary investigation assessment process and project timeframe, and provided an opportunity for community members to submit their feedback. It also enabled community members to register interest in the project. The session was attended by approximately 40 community members. A database and distribution list was compiled for future communications.

Following the route selection process, a second community information session took place on 21 October 2008 at the Tarcutta RSL and Citizens Club. This community information session was held to present and seek comment on the preferred western option for the proposed Tarcutta bypass to the broader community.

A third community information session took place on 18 June 2009 at the Tarcutta RSL and Citizens Club. The community information session was held to present the concept design prior to public exhibition of the environmental assessment and was attended by approximately 60 community members.

7.3.8 *Options assessment workshops*

During the route selection process, options assessment workshops were held to evaluate each of the preliminary route options to identify a preferred route. A summary of the comments made/concerns raised by agencies and stakeholders is provided in Section 7.4.

Workshops were held in June 2007 and October 2008, and were attended by a range of community, stakeholder and agency representatives. Section 4.1 details these workshops and their outcomes.

7.3.9 *Other communication tools*

A freecall 1800 project information telephone line (1800 755 767) and email address (tarcutta_bypass@pb.com.au) were established and maintained throughout the preliminary environmental assessment and environmental assessment phases. Contact information for the project team was provided on all public correspondence, as was a reply paid postal address to which letters could be directed. Further project information was also made available on the RTA's website (www.rta.nsw.gov.au).

7.4 Summary of agency, stakeholder and community issues and concerns

The issues raised by agencies, stakeholders and the community and stakeholders have been considered and addressed through the preliminary and detailed environmental assessment phases, and informed the detailed investigations undertaken for the project. The issues have been considered and addressed in the environmental assessment.

The issues raised by agencies, stakeholders and the community are detailed in Table 7-2 and Table 7-3 respectively.

Table 7-2 Summary of issues raised by government agencies during development of the project

Government agency	Issue	Specific issue raised	Where addressed in the environmental assessment
Department of Environment and Climate Change (now DECCW)	Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular updates on survey methodologies and results. 	DECC was consulted during the biodiversity assessment.
	Aboriginal heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular updates on cultural and archaeological survey methodologies and results. 	DECC was consulted during the Aboriginal heritage assessment.
	Environment protection licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project may require an Environment Protection Licence under Schedule 1 of the <i>Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997</i>. 	Section 2.1.2
	Noise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular updates regarding projected noise levels and proposed noise mitigation measures for the project. 	DECC was consulted during the noise assessment.
	Heavy vehicle inspection area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider an inspection area for the project to allow heavy vehicles to be safely inspected for compliance with the <i>Road and Rail Transport (Dangerous Goods) Act 1997</i>. 	Section 9.7.4
Department of Lands (DoL)	Land acquisition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acquire land under the provisions of the <i>Land Acquisition (Just Terms) Compensation Act 1991</i>. 	Section 9.6
	Environmental disturbance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine an offset for the loss of habitat values on Crown land in accordance with the <i>Native Vegetation Act 2003</i> and the <i>Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995</i>. 	Section 9.1.4 Technical Paper 1 (Volume 2)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct the project with minimal environmental disturbance to Crown land. The RTA is responsible for all remediation works required on Crown land. 	Sections 4.1, 4.2, 9.1 Technical Paper 1 (Volume 2)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct the project in a manner so as to not cause damage or increase soil erosion. 	Sections 6.3, 9.1, 10.1 Technical Paper 1 (Volume 2)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take measures to ensure that the project does not contribute to the spread of noxious weeds. Notify the Department of Lands if any noxious weeds or other environmental hazard are present on Crown land. 	Section 9.1 Technical Paper 1 (Volume 2)
	Public access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain and do not restrict public access on Crown land. 	The project would not restrict access to Crown land. A local service road would be provided to access the Crown land west of Tarcutta on the northern side of Tarcutta Creek. Section 5.3.3

Government agency	Issue	Specific issue raised	Where addressed in the environmental assessment
	Sediment and dust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure appropriate sediment and dust control measures are provided for the duration of the works. 	Sections 10.1, 10.3
Department of Primary Industries (now the Department of Industry and Investment)	Aquatic habitats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake adequate assessment of fish and fish habitat that would be affected by the project. Include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake fish sampling and aquatic habitat assessment of all Class 1-3 watercourses. Consider impacts on the Southern Pygmy Perch, identified in Tarcutta Creek, which is the first known record in the Murrumbidgee catchment. Assess the potential impacts of the project on fish and fish habitat. Consider the importance of the waterways and associated fish and fish habitat within the catchment area. Document any existing blockages to fish passage (full or partial) within each Class 1-3 watercourse, which may impact on the design of crossing structures, or mitigation measures adopted for the project. Consider any impacts structures in the floodplain may have on fish passage and connectivity of habitats during a flood event. Consider the significance of the impacts on threatened species listed under the <i>Fisheries Management Act 1994</i>. Make predictions regarding the extent and type of impact on fish, fish habitat and fish passage. Outline the types of mitigation and monitoring measures that would be undertaken. 	Section 9.1 Technical Paper 1 (Volume 2)
	Licenses and permits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notify the DPI (now the Department of Industry and Investment) of any proposed dredging and reclamation works (such as construction of temporary crossings, bridges, culverts, creek diversions, geotechnical investigations, excavating or reclaiming the bed or banks of any waterways) associated with the project in accordance with section 199 of the <i>Fisheries Management Act 1994</i>. A permit may be required to temporarily or permanently block fish passage (eg for bunding of waterways during bridge or culvert construction, use of silt fences across waterways and other similar works) under section 219 of the <i>Fisheries Management Act 1994</i>. Describe the type and extent of such works within the project. 	Section 5.3.10, 6.6.3, 9.4

Government agency	Issue	Specific issue raised	Where addressed in the environmental assessment
	Aquaculture, commercial and recreational fishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the type and location of aquaculture, commercial and recreational fishing activities within and downstream of the project that may be impacted by the project. 	Not applicable.
	Design considerations for crossings of Class 1–4 watercourses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design all watercourse crossings (including temporary crossings and permanent bridges and culverts) in accordance with DPI (now the Department of Industry and Investment) guidelines. Consult DPI (now the Department of Industry and Investment) during the detailed design phase of all stream crossings on Class 1–4 watercourses. Schedule work in streams in dry seasons, during periods of low flow, to minimise impacts on flow and fish passage, and should take into account the migratory seasons of fish. Works should be concluded quickly to minimise impacts on fish and fish passage. 	Sections 5.3.10, 6.6.3, 9.1 Technical Paper 1 (Volume 2) Chapter 11
	Revegetation of stream bed and banks and creek diversions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the proposed rehabilitation works for streams (existing or creek diversions), riverbanks and riparian vegetation zones disturbed during the project. Provide landscape plans, including the location, species, sources and numbers of plantings. Make suitable trees that are required to be removed available for the Murray Re-snagging project in accordance with the <i>Timber for Murray Re-snagging Project Guidelines for the RTA and Contractors</i>. 	Section 9.1 Technical Paper 1 (Volume 2) Rehabilitation plans would be developed during detailed design.
Department of Water and Energy	Water supply and access to water sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess water supply and access to water sources. Prioritise investigations on obtaining a suitable water supply. 	Section 9.4 Technical Papers 4, 5 (Volume 2)
	Water licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate existing and proposed water licensing requirements in accordance with the <i>Water Act 1912</i>, <i>Water Management Act 2000</i> and consideration of the <i>NSW Inland Groundwater Shortages Zone Order no's. 1 and 2, 2008</i>. 	Sections 6.3, 9.4 Technical Papers 4, 5 (Volume 2)
	Impacts to watercourses and associated systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate no adverse impacts to watercourses, riparian corridors, wetlands and groundwater dependent ecosystems as a result of the project. 	Sections 9.1, 9.4 Technical Papers 1, 5 (Volume 2)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide details on potential creek realignments. 	Sections 5.3.10, 9.1, 8.4

Government agency	Issue	Specific issue raised	Where addressed in the environmental assessment
Heritage Branch, Department of Planning	Impacts on State Heritage Register listed item	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide an adequate assessment of impacts on State Heritage Register (SHR) listed item Hambledon Homestead Complex. The impact on a SHR listed item should be considered a key issue for the environmental assessment. 	Sections 8.3, 9.3
Ministry of Transport	School bus services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address the potential for disruption to existing school bus services during construction of the project; also address in a future construction management plan. 	Section 9.7 Technical Paper 7 (Volume 2)
	Cycle way provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the opportunity for the provision of cycle way connections along the highway and to adjoining communities. 	Sections 5.3.8, 9.7.3, 9.7.4 Technical Paper 7 (Volume 2)
Wagga Wagga City Council	Aboriginal heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider Aboriginal heritage items in the area and consult the owners of those identified items. 	Section 9.2 Technical Paper 2 (Volume 2)
	Social and economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain close consultation to enable Council to consider and address social and economic implications and opportunities of the project. 	Wagga Wagga City Council has been regularly consulted during project development, which would continue during detailed design and construction.
	Signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss with Council matters regarding signage for the village of Tarcutta. 	
	Involvement in design development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct briefing meetings with Council to ensure Council is involved in the design development process. 	
Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts	Threatened species and ecological communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider impacts to threatened species and ecological communities protected under the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity and Conservation Act 1999</i>. 	Section 2.1.3, 9.1

Table 7-3 Summary of issues raised by the community and stakeholders during development of the project

Issue	Specific item raised	Where addressed in environmental assessment
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clearing of native vegetation. ▪ Habitat fragmentation due to severance, and edge effects. ▪ Impacts on aquatic communities. ▪ Prolonged drought period. ▪ Weeds and pests. 	Section 9.1 Technical Paper 1 (Volume 2)
Air quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dust during construction. ▪ Emissions during operation. 	Section 10.3
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Greenhouse gas emission during construction and operation. 	Section 10.6.1
Soils and landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Erosion and sedimentation during construction and operation. ▪ Salinity potential. ▪ Soil contamination. 	Sections 6.4.9, 9.4, 10.1, 10.5 Technical Paper 4 (Volume 2)
Surface and groundwater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Direct impacts on farm dams and bores/spring. ▪ Water quality during construction and operation. ▪ Potential draw down of groundwater during construction. ▪ Potential increase in intensity and/or frequency of storm events and impacts on creeks, flooding, drainage structures and other issues. 	Section 9.4 Technical Papers 4, 5 (Volume 2)
Social and economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Accessibility to the truck interchange facility. ▪ Loss of business and tourism from reduction in passing trade. ▪ Accessibility to town for local landholders. ▪ Ease of access to Wagga Wagga. ▪ Presence and maintenance of access to the travelling stock route. ▪ Loss of residential amenity. ▪ Loss of productive agricultural land. ▪ Changes to land use close to road corridor. 	Sections 9.6

Issue	Specific item raised	Where addressed in environmental assessment
Property acquisition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Access to severed property portions. ▪ Loss of infrastructure and access to infrastructure. 	Section 9.6
Aboriginal heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Impacts on archaeology and cultural sites. 	Section 9.2 Technical Paper 2 (Volume 2)
Non-Aboriginal heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Impact on Gundala House. ▪ Impact on Tarcutta House at the southern end of the project. 	Gundala House would not be affected by the project. Section 9.3
Noise and vibration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Potential impacts on currently unaffected properties and sensitive receivers (ie road will be closer). ▪ Vibration impacts on Tarcutta General Cemetery. ▪ Construction impacts on properties and sensitive receptors. ▪ Blasting. 	Section 9.5 Technical Paper 6 (Volume 2)
Urban design and landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Change in landscape character and view sheds. 	Section 10.2
Hazard and risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Spills. ▪ Bushfire. ▪ Emergency services access. 	Sections 5.3.7, 10.4
Cumulative impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Impact of the construction of all three bypasses the adjacent Hume Highway duplication works (ie impact on resources (materials and human)), travel times. ▪ Impact on biodiversity. ▪ Impact on Aboriginal heritage. 	Sections 9.1, 9.2, Chapter 12
Traffic and transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Delays during construction. ▪ Changed traffic patterns (regional and local) during operation. 	Section 9.7 Technical Paper 7 (Volume 2)

7.5 Consultation: the next steps

The RTA is committed to ongoing community and stakeholder consultation. Section 2.3.1 identifies the key steps in the Part 3A environmental assessment process. The RTA will maintain communication with the community, stakeholders and agencies throughout this process. During public exhibition of the environmental assessment, a staffed community information session will take place in Tarcutta.

Should the project be approved, the RTA would continue to consult with community members, stakeholders and government agencies during the pre-construction and construction phases of the project. A freecall 1800 project information line, project email and project website would be maintained throughout construction.

Community members would receive advanced notification of scheduled construction works, alternative access arrangements, traffic detours and public transport disruptions throughout construction.