

Huon Link Road

Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works

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Authorisation

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I. Introduction

I.1. Project Name

Huon Link Road

I.2. Project Summary

Rationale/project objectives:

The project is described as the Huon Link Road and will construct a new road around the eastern side of the Huonville township.

The objectives of the project are to:

- Improve road safety for all road users
- Improve accessibility and connectivity of road networks
- Improve efficiency and network reliability
- Reduce traffic congestion along Main Street, Huonville.

Key Benefits:

- Improved traffic and pedestrian safety along Main Street and at the Channel Highway/Huon Highway junction by reducing the number of cars on that section of road.
- Shorter travel times between Cygnet and Hobart.
- Reduced traffic congestion along Main Street.
- New and improved public transport facilities, with the upgrade and consolidation of several bus stops along Flood Road.
- Improved road safety and reliability for vehicles travelling along Channel Highway (The Esplanade) that can be impacted and restricted by flood events.
- an improvement to local businesses resulting from safer and easier access to businesses by the reduction of traffic congestion and improved amenity within the town centre.

I.3. Project Location

The project is in the local government area of the Huon Valley, in Huonville. The project connects the Huon Highway with Channel Highway via Flood Rd.

The location of the Huon Link Road project is provided in Figure I.

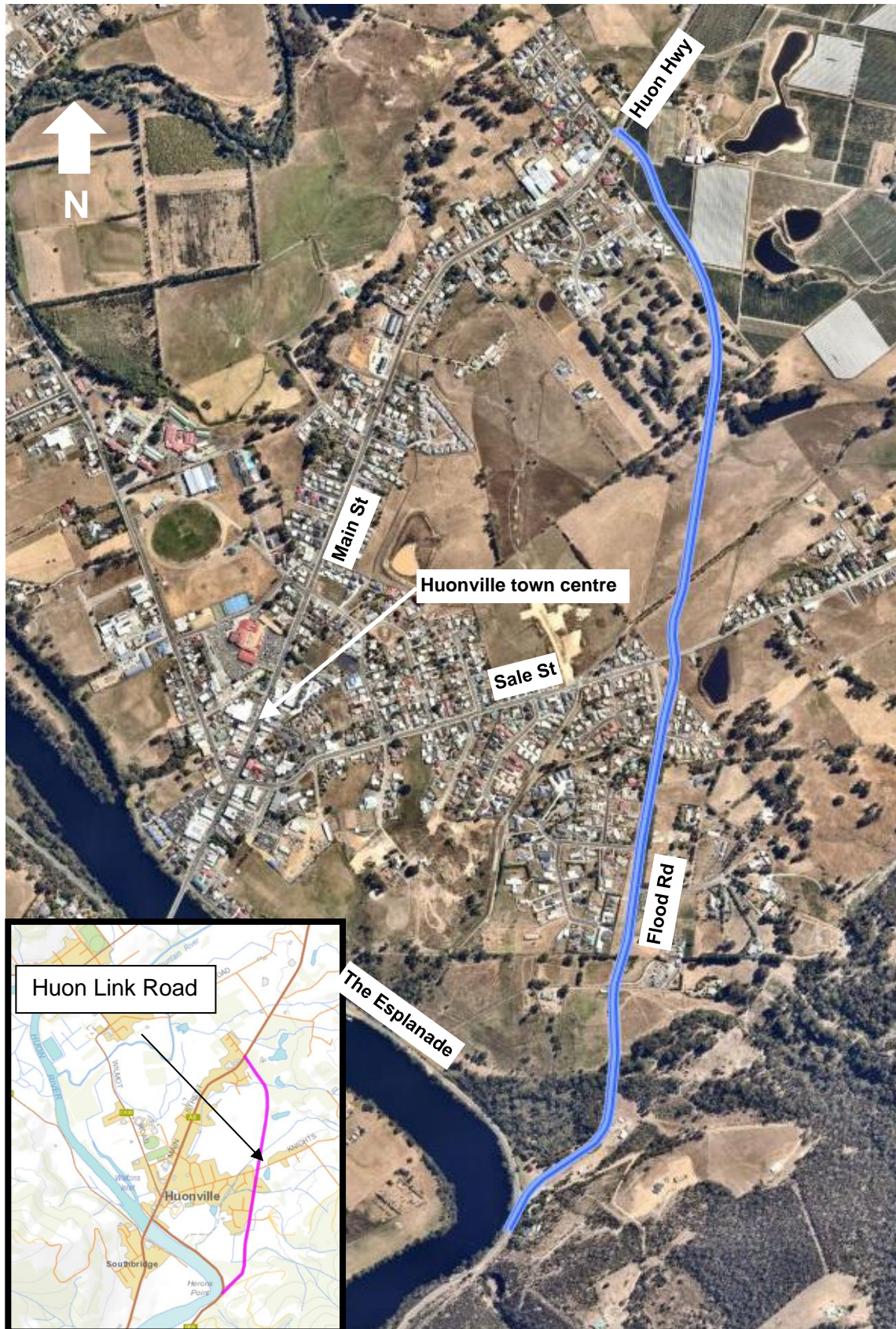


Figure 1: Huon Link Road route from Channel Highway to Huon Highway

1.4. Related Projects and Strategic Context

The Huon Link Road project has been noted as a local infrastructure priority in several local strategic initiatives, which are discussed in Section 2.1 below.

2. Project Scope

2.1. Problem/ Opportunity Statement

The project addresses safety, travel time reliability and asset/access reliability issues, which were initially raised by industry and the local community through local forums and then formally identified in the Australian Government co-funded Huon Link Road (2019) project under the Investment Road and Rail funding program.

Numerous technical, consultation and strategic planning reports have been done and the following summarise the outcomes of these studies. The community has expressed consistent support for the Huon Link Road project across numerous public consultation and engagement events sponsored by Huon Valley Council. Recently, the Huon Link Road project has been noted as a local infrastructure priority in the following local strategic initiatives:

- The 2011 Huonville/Ranelagh Structure Plan where the following needs were identified in key stakeholder consultations:
 - traffic management in town centre
 - bypass/new road options.
- The Huon Valley Council's 2019 Huonville Ranelagh Masterplan. Stakeholder engagement was completed by the Huon Valley Council in December 2017, which identified the following key areas of concern.
 - The existing bridge intersection of Main Street to the Esplanade is dangerous.
 - There are too many entrance/exit points along Main Street that are not safe.
 - A bypass/new road to Cygnet is supported.
 - Huonville is currently a township that people pass through. People need to be encouraged to stop.
 - The majority who provided feedback thought it was more desirable not to bring traffic through Huonville. Some felt that more people were likely to buy something if they stopped and walked around the area because there would be less traffic and it would be more pleasant.
- The 2019 Huon Valley Council Federal Election Strategy. The proposal to build the Huon Link Road is listed as a very important infrastructure priority for the following reasons.
 - The Huon Valley is experiencing strong population growth.
 - The amount of traffic on Main Street and the vehicle congestion it generates in Huonville, together with other traffic related issues, are key issues of concern to the community.
 - Traffic generated by new residential and commercial developments is increasing, which in turn is making the need for improved connectivity urgent.
 - The Channel Highway (The Esplanade) and Huon Highway (Main Street) junction is a concern to motorists.
 - Flooding along the Channel Highway (The Esplanade) is an additional safety and accessibility issue.
- The 2021 Department of State Growth Huon Highway Corridor Study (pending publication). The Department sought feedback to identify opportunities to improve the Huon Highway Road corridor over the next 30 years. Feedback covered the following matters:
 - traffic safety at the intersection of Channel Highway and the Huon Highway
 - diversion of traffic to Flood Road
 - desire for the Huon Link Road to connect to the northern section of Main Street to ensure that heavy vehicles travelling east towards Cygnet are diverted away from town centre to improve safety and amenity.

Problems with Existing Link:

Traffic modelling done for the period 2019 – 2029 showed that traffic volumes on Main Street are forecast to increase due to population growth.

Traffic simulation modelling, of the existing intersection of the Channel Highway and the Huon Highway, identifies that this junction performs very poorly in all the 2029 “Do Nothing” scenarios. Average delays grow from less than 20 seconds (2019 period) to 150 seconds in 2029. The additional delays at this site are caused by a lack of gaps for right turning traffic from the Channel Highway onto Huon Highway. There have been 152 crashes reported on the Huon Highway between Orchard Avenue and the Channel Highway intersection over the last 10 years. The crash profile includes a high proportion of a property damage nature, generally relating to parking and central business district activities. It is likely that the forecast 28% traffic volume reduction, travelling through Huonville along the Huon Highway and Channel Highway towards Cygnet will also reduce the number of crashes occurring along these links.

Similarly, the section of the Channel Highway between the intersection of Huon Highway and Flood Road will carry significantly less traffic due to vehicles using the new link road because of the travel time efficiencies to be gained.

This is also forecast to result in a lowering of the number of crashes along this section of Channel Highway.

Potential Opportunities

Despite the forecast increase in 2029 traffic volumes, it is still of note that the increase in traffic on Main Street is less substantial when the Huon Link Road is included in the modelling. This highlights how the bypass draws traffic from the eastern side of Huonville and from the Channel Highway where approximately 4,450 vehicles per day have been modelled using the Huon Link Road in 2029.

The construction of this project will provide a safer and more efficient trip for road users.:

- Improvement to current safety conditions for road users and pedestrians.
- Improvement of access to the Channel Highway.
- Improvement to traffic efficiency.
- Reduction in average delay at Channel Highway/Huon Highway intersection compared to 2029 model scenario.
- Consequential improvements to the amenity of Main Street.
- Potential consequential improvements to reduction of crashes along the Huon Highway due to the traffic to and from Cygnet being directed onto the Huon Link Road.
- Capacity to upgrade the existing Flood Road as part of the works.

2.2. Options Evaluation

A northern route and a southern route were considered for an Options Analysis and presented to the community for public consultation.

The northern route was identified as the preferred route and is the route to be developed.

The southern route, although shorter in length, results in the proposed road traversing through land zoned for future residential development compared to the northern route which passes through rural and agricultural zoned land. The southern route requires land acquisition and compensable items of a greater amount than the northern route. The overall costs of both options are similar.

The two options are shown on Figure 3 overleaf.

Traffic modelling reveals that the northern route option provides significant travel time benefits to traffic travelling between the Channel Highway and the Huon Highway to the north of Huonville. It also provides benefits to those living in the eastern areas of Huonville by providing simple access to the Huon and Channel Highways. The southern route showed a similar trend of benefit but of a noticeably smaller magnitude.

Options analysis criteria evaluated to inform the public consultation process for both the northern and southern routes related to:

- improvement to current safety conditions
- improvement of access to the Channel Highway
- improvement to traffic efficiency
- impact to future urban growth
- impact to acquisition of land
- total project cost.

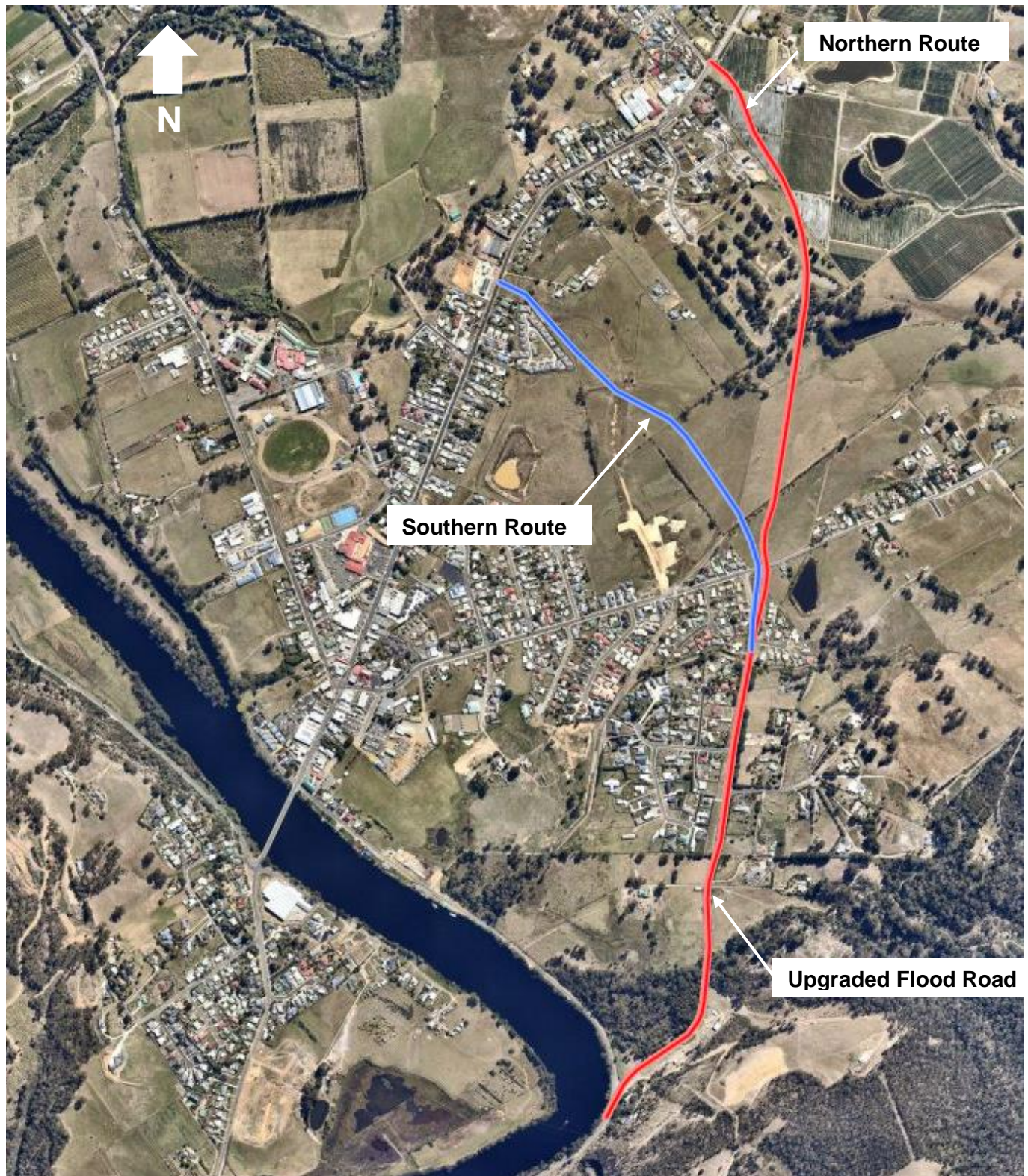


Figure 3: Options reviewed for the Huon Link Road

2.3. Scope of Project

The project will build a new state road, the northern route, around the eastern side of the Huonville township.

This new road will divert highway traffic from the Main Street of Huonville. The new road will connect into the existing Flood Road which will be upgraded to suit the Project's objectives.

3. Project Cost

3.1. Overall Project Cost Summary Table

The Huon Link Road Project is supported by a \$29.2 million funding commitment from the Australian and Tasmanian governments (\$13.2 million from the Australian Government, \$16 million from the Tasmanian Government).

The following project cost estimates have been prepared on detailed design information.

The costs are broken down in the table below, where the base cost estimate includes design development which is underway and ongoing.

The project scope will be monitored to ensure the project is delivered within the project budget.

	P50 (\$m AUD)	P90 (\$m AUD)
Base Cost Estimate	\$16,294,594	\$16,294,594
Contingency	\$2,424,162	\$4,272,005
Total Project Cost Estimate	\$19,348,756	\$21,196,598
Escalation	\$715,904	\$784,274
Total Outturn Cost Estimate	\$20,064,660	\$21,980,873

3.2. Budget profile for the Project

Financial Year Forecast Milestone Requirement *

P90 Outturn		FY21/22 (\$)	FY22/23 (\$)	FY23/24 (\$)	FY24/25 (\$)	Balance of Commitment ** (\$)
	Australian Government contribution	0.00	5,280,000	5,280,000	2,640,000	0
	State Government contribution	992,000	6,500,000	1,288,873	0	0
	Other contribution (provide detail)	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	992,000	11,780,000	6,568,873	2,640,000	0

4. Project Benefits

4.1. Expected positive outcomes and benefits to be delivered by the Project

The Huon Link Road has a positive benefit cost ratio and will deliver significant positive impacts, with the most significant being crash reduction due to reduced congestion. The project will also deliver the following positive impacts.

- Travel time savings to existing users of both direction along the Huon Highway / Channel Highway link to and from Cygnet and Hobart.
- Reduced vehicle operating costs to existing users.
- Reduced noise impact and increased amenity in Huonville due to heavy vehicles travelling to Cygnet using the Huon Link Road at the entrance to Huonville.

5. Finance and Procurement

5.1. Preferred procurement method for the Project

A design consultancy contract has been let and a construct only procurement model will be adopted for the delivery of this project. This methodology will provide for faster delivery of the project due to the aggressive program, while minimising risks to the Department on delivery of the desired project outcomes.

5.2. Project Timeline

Anticipated high level dates for the program are provided below.

Activity	Commencement	Completion
EPBC Considerations	December 2021	August 2022
Detailed Design	March 2022	September 2022
Development Application	October 2022	November 2022
Property Acquisition	June 2022	November 2022
Construction Activity		
Tender Release	November 2022	December 2022
Award of Contract	February 2023	February 2023
Construction	March 2023	December 2024
Project Closeout	January 2025	July 2025

6. Risk and Sustainability

6.1. Major risks, and proposed mitigation strategies

A risk assessment has been undertaken in accordance with the Department of State Growth process and a risk register has been developed, including mitigation strategies. It will be further developed and reviewed throughout the development and delivery phases of the project.

Overall, the project is viewed as relatively low risk, as it has the support of local government, key stakeholders, and the local community.

Risk Event	Major Risk Summary	Risk Mitigation Strategy
Potential flooding	Inundation of land on the eastern side of the new highway is a risk due to the new road being higher than the adjacent area.	Independent verification of the design has been undertaken to ensure the storm water design is capable of managing large storm events.
Stakeholder and community concerns with environment	Given the physical impact associated with this road project, environmental and cultural heritage concerns among stakeholders are possible.	Mitigation measures included changing the alignment of Flood Road to minimise impact to the threatened vegetation located at the corner of Flood Road and Channel Highway. Additionally, the project will provide vegetation 'offsets' to replace lost vegetation. Project construction to include and be in accordance with Unanticipated Discovery Plan. Communication and stakeholder engagement planned to openly communicate any impacts and mitigations.
Impact Aboriginal heritage	Artefact is uncovered	The project has consulted with Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania and no artefacts have been identified. Project construction to include and be in accordance with Unanticipated Discovery Plan
Construction	Inadequate or inappropriate construction methods, materials and/or work conditions, resulting in unsafe, unsatisfied, or non-conforming works.	Ensure suitable management plans that manage safety and environmental risks are provided and implemented by the contractor.

Property Acquisition	Affected landowners dissatisfied with acquisition and lobby Government to change project design.	The project has liaised with affected landowners, and all are supportive of the project. One affected landowner is lobbying the Gov't to provide them with property upgrades.
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6.2. Major dis-benefits including likely impacts to the community and environment

The project requires the acquisition of private land to allow the project to proceed. There are 3 properties which are affected more than any other. These properties include a commercial orchard, a small-scale dairy farm and a future residential sub-division. All three property owners will be compensated for their loss and impact to their operations.

The overall long-term benefits in travel time savings, safety outcomes and improved amenity on Main Street are considered to outweigh the dis-benefits of this project.

The table below outlines identified minor dis-benefits and impacts to the community and environment for the project.

Minor Dis-benefits and/or Community and Environmental Impacts
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Traffic disruption during construction.• Some property owners will enter and exit their properties in a different way.• Existing properties in the vicinity of Debra Place will have an altered outlook from the rear of their properties. Their current vista is open farmland. The new vista will include sections of new road that are approx. 2.65m above current ground level.• Property acquisitions. (See section 7.3)

6.3. Detail any sustainability strategies that will be adopted

The Department of State Growth embeds sustainability in all activities. For the Huon Link Road project, sustainability initiatives will be considered by the nominated designer and contractor, during the Development and Delivery Phases. Initiatives include the following.

- Vegetation offsets will be provided, in accordance with the Huon Valley Council's Biodiversity Offset Policy, to replace the loss of threatened flora / fauna habitat.
- Stormwater management identified in the design and adopted during construction.
- Reusing material on site.
- Native plants will be used in any landscaping.
- Consideration to use Open Graded Asphalt for noise mitigation along sections of the route in lieu of noise barrier walls, reducing project resource use.
- Sourcing material locally.

7. Stakeholder Engagement

7.1. Public and Stakeholder participation and consultation

A Stakeholder and Community Engagement Plan) has been prepared for this project in accordance with the State Roads Stakeholder and Community Engagement Framework. This document is a whole of project document that will be updated and managed throughout each phase of the project.

7.2. Record of Stakeholder Consultation

A copy of the Community Consultation & Feedback Summary Report is attached in Appendix B.

7.3. Directly affected landowners and property acquisition

Property acquisition is required by the project.

The northern half of the link road will pass through what is currently open farmland and includes the apple orchard at Huon Highway. Additional localised areas of property acquisition are required at the roundabout locations and existing junctions where these are being connected into the new alignment. Acquisition required includes land only – no dwellings are impacted.

Consultation has commenced with directly affected landowners and will continue as the project progresses in accordance with the Stakeholder and Community and Engagement Plan.

A Notice of Accommodation Works will be provided to all directly affected landowners which will summarise how the landowner will be impacted by the project and how the proposed design will manage these impacts.

Property acquisition requirements will be communicated to the affected landowners and acquisition will be undertaken in accordance with the Land Acquisition Act 1993 using the compulsory acquisition process when acquisition does not involve residences.

8. Compliance

8.1. List Commonwealth or State legislation triggered by the Project

Legislation	Department / Authority	Likelihood
<i>Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993</i>	Huon Valley Council	Certain
<i>Land Acquisition Act 1993</i>	Private property	Certain – acquisition of land will occur.
<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> (Commonwealth)	Department of Agriculture, Water, and the Environment	Very Low
<i>Threatened Species Protection Act 1995</i>	Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania	Possible
<i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 1975</i>	Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania	Possible, however no Aboriginal heritage sites, suspected features or specific areas of elevated archaeological potential were identified during field survey.
<i>Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995</i>	Heritage Tasmania	Very Low.
<i>Roads and Jetties Act 1935</i>	Department of State Growth	Likely – TasNetworks relocations

8.2. Noise

The *Tasmanian State Road Traffic Noise Management Guidelines* have been applied and it was identified that a short section of the new highway alignment, in the vicinity of Debra Place, will likely require mitigation.

The project has addressed this matter and reduced predicted noise levels to below the allowed thresholds by adopting the use of 'Open Graded Asphalt' as the road surface seal.

8.3. Environment (Flora, Fauna, Landscaping, and visual amenity)

A Natural Values Assessment report has been carried out in addition to the EPBC MNES (Matter of National Environmental Significance) assessment.

This self-assessment concluded that due to the very small area of potential impact to the community along the margins of the existing roads, the project is not considered likely to have a significant impact on the listed community.

Financial payments have been allowed for in accordance with Huon Valley Council's Biodiversity Offset Policy.

Flora and Fauna assessment overview

The purpose of the flora and fauna assessment was to examine the environment within the proposed development area and identify the extent of any environmental values that may constrain the suitability of the site for the Huon Link Road project.

Potential Impacts

The self-assessment indicated that while the proposed alignment will impact flora, it will not significantly impact environmental values listed at Commonwealth and State levels.

Mitigation Strategy

In order to mitigate minor impacts on natural values and to be consistent with the recommendations of the Natural Values Assessment, the construction contractor will be required to provide and implement a Construction Environmental Management Plan which will be prepared in accordance with the Department of State Growth Standard Specification 176 – Environmental Management, and will include provisions to:

- ensure that all works and vegetation clearance will be limited to the extent shown in the approved plans;
- provide and comply with an Erosion and Sediment Control Plan
- comply with the State Growth Bird Nest Management Protocol
- ensure batters and other exposed areas are revegetated and stabilised
- provide a summary of erosion and sedimentation measures
- implement a Weed Management Plan to ensure that weed and hygiene management for the project comply with the Weed Management Act 1999.

Visual Impacts

The proposed new highway consists of 2 distinct segments; i) upgrade of the existing Flood Road and ii) a new single lane highway north of Sale Street.

Regarding Flood Road, the proposed upgrade will not have any significant visual impacts to neighbouring properties. The upgrade will widen the road but will not raise its elevation. The land along Flood Road consists of a combination of urban residential and peri urban.

Regarding the new northern section, some existing residential allotments, typically along Debra Place, may experience a perceived reduction of amenity due to the new highway being elevated above surrounding ground levels. These properties / lots currently have views to the north overlooking the orchard.

8.4. Heritage (Aboriginal and Historic)

An Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment has been undertaken for the project site. No Aboriginal heritage sites or suspected Aboriginal heritage features were identified during the assessment. A search of the Aboriginal Heritage Register shows that there are no registered Aboriginal sites within or in the immediate vicinity of the study area corridor.

The field survey was also able to confirm that there are no stone resources within the study area corridor that would be suitable for stone artefact manufacturing. There is no evidence for any stone material types being present which would have been potentially targeted by Aboriginal people for artefact manufacturing.

The survey also confirmed that there are no sizeable rock outcrops occurring within the study area corridor, and therefore there is no potential for Aboriginal rock shelters to be present.

A Historic Heritage Assessment has been undertaken for the project site with the road alignment not traversing any heritage place or precinct under the State Heritage Register.

8.5. Planning Approvals

A Planning Permit under the Huon Valley Interim Planning Scheme 2015 will be required for the work.

The permit application has been lodged with council and it is expected that a permit will be issued by the end of November.

Appendix A: Public Display Plans

Appendix B: Consultation Summary Report