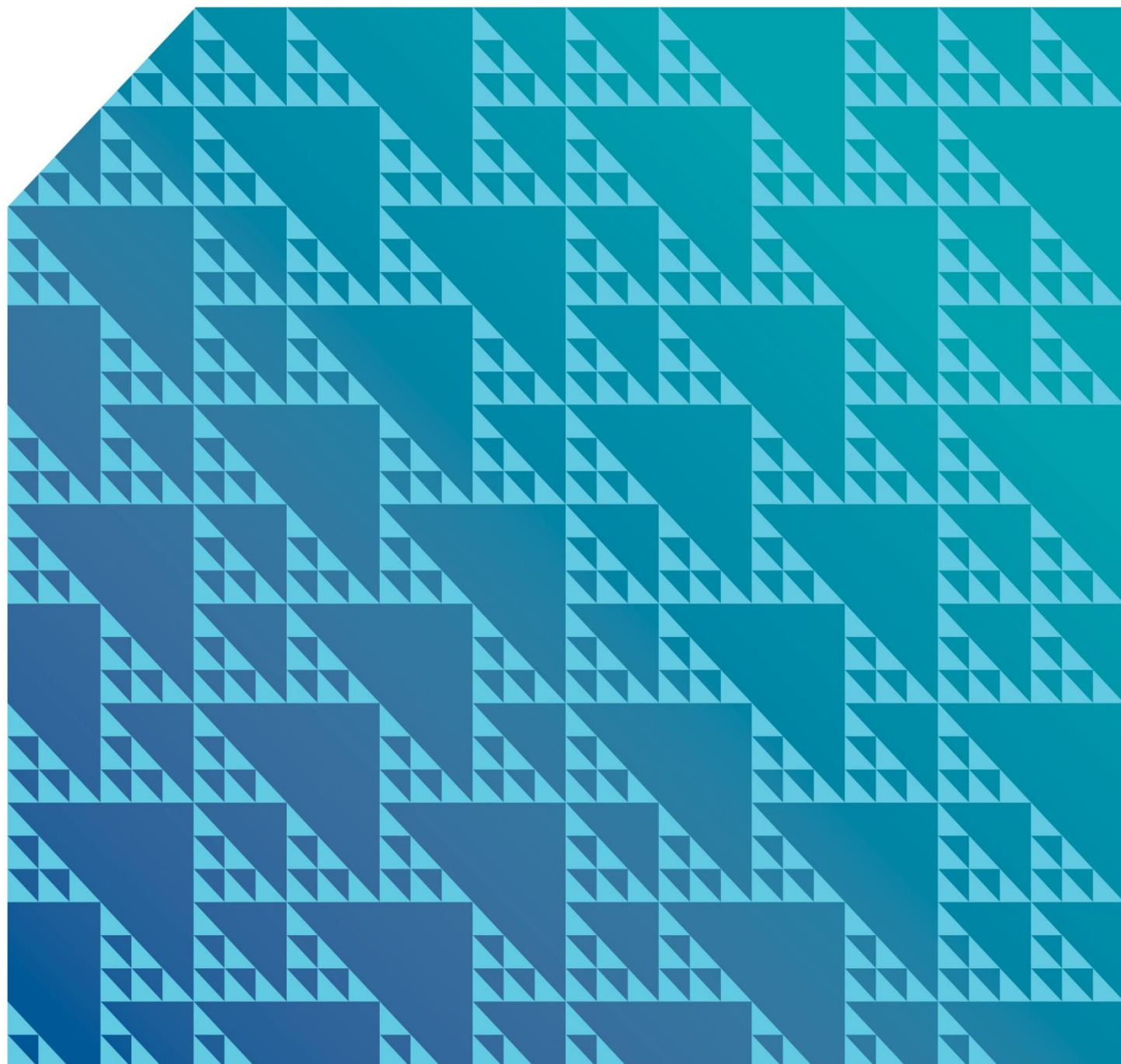


Illawarra Road Upgrade
March 2021

Community Consultation and Feedback Report



Australian Government

BUILDING OUR FUTURE



Tasmanian
Government

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this project has been to provide an upgrade to Illawarra Road which is a major linkage in the Tasmanian road network, providing one of the major access routes between Hobart and the north and northwest coast. In addition, the road is a significant rural access road, bypassing Longford which is a major rural service centre, and being bounded on both sides by viable and active farming operations.

The upgrade should result in increases in freight efficiency as well as improving safety along this important connector road.

The consultation approach has been direct engagement with individual landowners and key stakeholders along the road corridor. This was the chosen approach as many of these landowners having been engaged with extensively over the years, and in some instances being unhappy with previous engagement experiences. However critically, we needed specific feedback on how landowners used their properties, what issues or concerns they had, and to understand the farming operations on the site.

The feedback from the landowners related to concerns about safety accessing and exiting the property; concerns about the speed that vehicles travel, particularly in relation to the frequent farm vehicle movements in the area; interest in seeing cycling infrastructure included in any design response; the fact that many farms have land on either side of the road requiring movement of stock, people and vehicles from one side to the other; and opinions on the procurement approach proposed.

Specific feedback will be considered in the final design. It is important to note that the engagement process has not been completed, and as design drawings are progressed, the project team will be engaging further with the community to consider whether the proposed outcomes appropriately address their concerns or otherwise. To this end, design details have not been finalised and clear outcomes are not yet identifiable.

Project overview

The project has been identified in the 'Tasmanian Road Package' of the Australian Government's 'Roads of Strategic Importance Initiative' to improve productivity and efficiency on key freight networks. The project will provide better connections between agricultural regions and ports, airports and other transport hubs, and better access to tourism, mining, and other sectors. It is also expected to provide a safer road environment.

Illawarra Main Road is a key link in the Tasmanian State road network and provides access to the freight movements between Hobart and the northern and north western regions of Tasmania. It eliminates the need to travel via Launceston when connecting between the Midland Highway and Bass Highway, reducing travel time by providing a time saving transport link. Currently, Illawarra road is single carriageway with three bridges over the South Esk River, a roundabout taking traffic to the south to Longford and a bridge over Back Creek.

The upgrade will increase freight efficiency between the Midland Highway and Bass Highway. The upgrade is expected to also improve safety outcomes along this connector road.

Upgrading this road was considered in 2012 through a Pitt and Sherry report which was further reviewed in 2019 and 2020. Identified issues include:

- Limitations for road widening exist between Pateena Road and the Poatina Road roundabout due to the existence of 3 road bridges. An assessment of the bridges was undertaken in 2019/20 and it was determined that the bridges met the current needs for this section of road. There are limitations to widening this section of the Illawarra Main Road due to the existing bridge lane widths and other options may have to be considered to achieve the AusRap 3 rating for this section, such as a review of the speed limit.
- The location of the overtaking lanes as proposed in the Pitt and Sherry report should be changed to the opposite side of the road travelling in the opposite direction.
- Consideration to be given to the inclusion of additional safety and efficiency benefits of:
 - Realigning Tannery Road and Bishopsbourne intersection to a staggered T-intersection.
 - Provision of turning lanes off Illawarra Main Road at this intersection.
 - Improvements to the Bass Highway ramp and Illawarra Main Road intersections to provide a safer, more seamless connection between the two roads.
- Investigation of the inclusion of turning facilities (P and G turns) to allow for safer access to local properties.
- Investigate the provision of heavy vehicle rest areas. The heavy vehicle rest areas are expected to be informal areas with capacity for 5 vehicles, have appropriately constructed entry and exit points and will be sign posted consistent with the Tasmanian Roadside Signs Manual and Austroads Guideline for the Provision of Heavy Vehicle Rest Area Facilities. It is expected that an informal area would be provided in both the east and west bound directions in the vicinity of the roundabout to Longford.
- Consideration for the extension of the shared path from Perth Links Road to Longford. The Perth Links Roads projects has included a cycling path link and a connection to this section of Illawarra Main Road. The Department of State Growth will work with Council regarding a safe cycling path link between Longford and Perth.

Consultation objectives

The Department of State Growth, its consultants and contractors understand that engagement objectives are a critical component of planning stakeholder engagement. Objectives support the project by aligning to the values, views, knowledge, and aspirations of the community. They will be relevant to the project and, where possible, be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Reasonable and Timely (SMART). This will link the objectives with actions and enable relevant evaluation.

Objectives:

- To provide stakeholders with project information in a timely manner, specifically to ensure engagement supports a clear understanding about the design phases of the project, its timing, and impacts.
- To provide relevant and specific channels for communication and respond appropriately to all contact within three business days.
- To inform property owners of the potential need to enter their property to undertake field investigations, and to obtain signed permits.

Specific engagement objectives for this stage of the engagement include:

- Notification of field investigations to adjacent and directly affected organisations, commercial businesses and property owners and occupiers, including:
 - Geotechnical investigations, which may include temporary lane closures.
 - Environmental and heritage surveys
 - Survey and scanning
 - Any other field investigations as required.
- Gaining an understanding of anticipated impacts to property owners in relation to access into and out of their property.
- Understanding the likely impacts of the installation of wire barriers on accessibility and vehicle of movement in the area.
- Understanding how property owners use their land in relation to pivot irrigation and movement of livestock between properties.

Considerations

The project is located on Illawarra Main Road (A1468) in the northern region of Tasmania across two local government areas in the electorate of Lyons. Northern Midlands Council is at the eastern end (Chainage 0.00 to 10.63) and Meander Valley Council at the western end (Chainage 10.63 to 13.77).. Illawarra Main Road starts at Perth in the east and passes Longford to the south (via Wellington Street), meeting the Bass Highway at Carrick at the western end.

Illawarra Main Road has been identified as a road of strategic importance by the Australian government and forms an important link in the State Road Network to transport freight to and from the north and north west of the state to key suppliers and producers and transport locations such as Hobart in the south of the state.

The adjacent land is rural residential/private freehold, with a pocket of conservation and priority habitat adjacent to the Wellington Street turn off to Longford. Below is a map of the local area showing the specific project location.

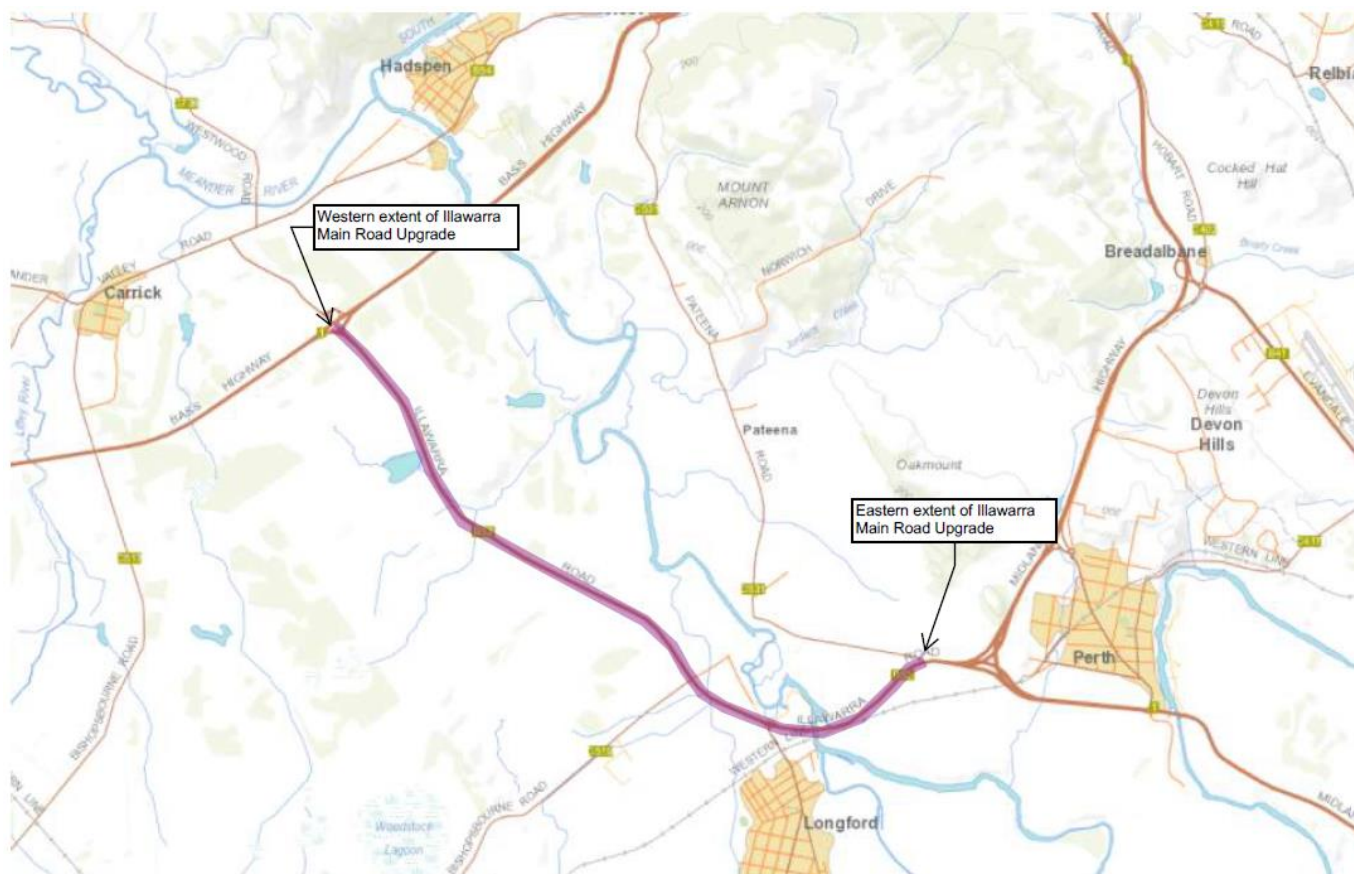


Figure 1: Project extents.

This area has had extensive consultation over many years, both in relation to upgrades of Illawarra Road, but also in relation to upgrades of other roads in the area (including Perth Links). Previous engagement feedback was considered as part of this engagement process, as well as previous documentation submitted to the Department from Stakeholders. This included written letters from landowners, as well as documentation from Council in relation to expectations around cycle paths, and previous studies.

Consideration was given to the type of land use in the area, which is dominated by agricultural activities, with the township of Longford a major rural hub. However other land uses, including residential and some tourism uses, also feature. Critically, the road is used by through traffic travelling from the north west coast to Hobart and this has contributed to the higher vehicle volumes.

Consultation summary

It is of note that consultation for this project has not been completed. However, the consultation approach was direct engagement with all landowners along the road corridor and this has occurred. It is intended that as the project progresses, further individual engagement will occur as details around any design upgrade is resolved.

The purpose of undertaking individual engagement was to understand the following things:

- Is their property a residential use or a business use?
- If they farm on the property, what are their normal vehicle movements, in which direction, and involving what kind of vehicles (tractors, trucks, utes etc)?

- Do they have a need to cross stock from one side of Illawarra Road to the other?
- Do they use pivot irrigators and what sort of separation is there between the pivot irrigators and the road corridor?
- What are their experiences of the road corridor? What improvements could they recommend?
- Are there heritage characteristics along the corridor?
- Do they have concerns about the loss of vegetation values or hedges along the corridor?

In addition, other stakeholders including the Northern Midlands Council, Meander Valley Council, and the Tasmanian Heritage Council were engaged with. Organisations such as TasRail were contacted and feedback was provided, as was the local RSL in the Longford area, and the Freight Logistics group.

It is intended that as the project continues, all these groups will continue to be consulted and feedback considered as part of the design process.

Feedback summary

Submissions were received from 19 landowners or organisations. The concerns raised were varied but there were key themes that presented themselves. These included:

- Concerns about flexible wire safety barriers and how this will impact upon the manoeuvrability across the highway, particularly given the high number of farm vehicle movements.
- Concerns about the speed of the road corridor, particularly because some sections of the corridor have issues with speeding vehicles. Drivers often get frustrated with slower moving farm vehicles.
- Concerns that several accesses have very poor sight lines and with the speed of vehicles, it makes entering and exiting the properties hazardous. This is much worse when slow moving vehicles are attempting to enter onto the highway.
- Concerns about this road being used as a highway in general – Illawarra Road is a rural service road but carries very high volumes of tourist and commuter traffic.
- There are lots of cyclists on the roads, and the cycle path should be extended to Longford as from there cyclists can take a range of back roads which are much safer.
- Concerns about needing to cross stock from one side of the road to another, if traffic must be stopped while 400 – 500 sheep crosses, this can result in queues of up to 100 vehicles.
- Concerns about the procurement approach, several community members highlighted their dislike of the design and construct process, particularly as it can result in new stakeholder engagement specialists and having to explain everything again.

Location of submissions

The following table outlines the location of those stakeholders and community members who submitted feedback.

Location (suburb/ postcode)	Total number of submissions
Longford	14
Carrick	2

Westbury	1
Launceston	2

Lessons learned

The approach to meet all landowners in person and individually was very successful. It provided them an opportunity to understand the project and to feel like their feedback was being heard. Some of them have come back to us since and provided further information. It will be important to continue to maintain those lines of communication as the project progresses to maintain the goodwill.

Outcome and recommendations

The designs have not been finalised, and it is expected that ongoing consultation and engagement with the community will be required before a final design is achieved. However, the feedback received highlighted the following issues which should be taken into account in any design:

- There was a need for several property owners to cross Illawarra Road as part of their farming operations. How this is managed moving forward, be it through gaps in wire rope, underpasses, or turning areas, must be identified, and reflected in any subsequent design plans.
- Concerns about procurement and the Design and Construct approach were acknowledged and it is understood the Department is considering a different approach to address that.
- The high numbers of farm vehicles on the road were acknowledged and observed and ensuring any turning areas provided can accommodate a range of vehicle types will be important.
- Sight lines at a number of key locations must be improved.
- Consideration of whether the road verges can be widened must be undertaken as part of the works.

Timing and costs

Work on the final plans is progressing and ongoing engagement and consultation will need to occur over the coming months. It is anticipated that due to the size and geographical distance of the project, it will need to be separated into stages with each individual stage being acted upon separately. The first stage will ideally be ready for construction in Spring/Summer of 2021/2022.

Next steps

As the design plans are further developed it will be important to go back to the community to discuss design progress in greater detail, and to ensure the feedback previously raised has been appropriately captured in the designs.



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