Illawarra Main Road Upgrade

Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works

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Amendments in this Release

Section Title	Section Number	Amendment Summary

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3	2.0	10 June 2021	Project Manager

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	Name	**Signature**	**Date**
Authorised by:	Adrian Paine		

1. Introduction

1.1. Project Name

Illawarra Main Road Upgrade.

1.2. Project Summary

Rational / Objectives: The project has been identified in the Tasmanian Road Package of the 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.

The Illawarra Main Road is a key link in the Tasmanian State road network and provides access to the freight hubs between Hobart and the northern and north western regions of Tasmania. It eliminates the need to travel via Launceston, reducing travel time by providing a time saving transport link.

The key objective of the Illawarra Main Road upgrade is to improve the road network to a Category 1 Road under the Tasmanian State Road Hierarchy and achieve an AusRap 3 star safety rating.

Location: The Illawarra Main Road is located between the Midland Highway at the western extents of Perth Links Road to the Bass Highway at Carrick, in northern Tasmania.

Illawarra Main Road, A1468, B52 route number. Chainage 3.1 (western end of Perth Links Road Upgrade along Illawarra Main Road to 13.77 (Carrick at Bass Highway). Illawarra Main Road terminates at its intersection with Meander Valley Road approximately 1.8km north west of the Bass Highway.

Key Benefits: The upgrade will increase freight efficiency by improving travel time reliability between the north and south of Tasmania between the Midland Highway and Bass Highway. The upgrade is expected to also improve safety outcomes along this connector road.

Progress to Date: The project is currently in the concept design phase.

1.3. Project Location

The location of Illawarra Main Road is provided in Figure 1, 2 and 3. The geographical coordinates are:

Eastern End: 51342 E, 539722 N

Western End: 503684 E, 5401717 N

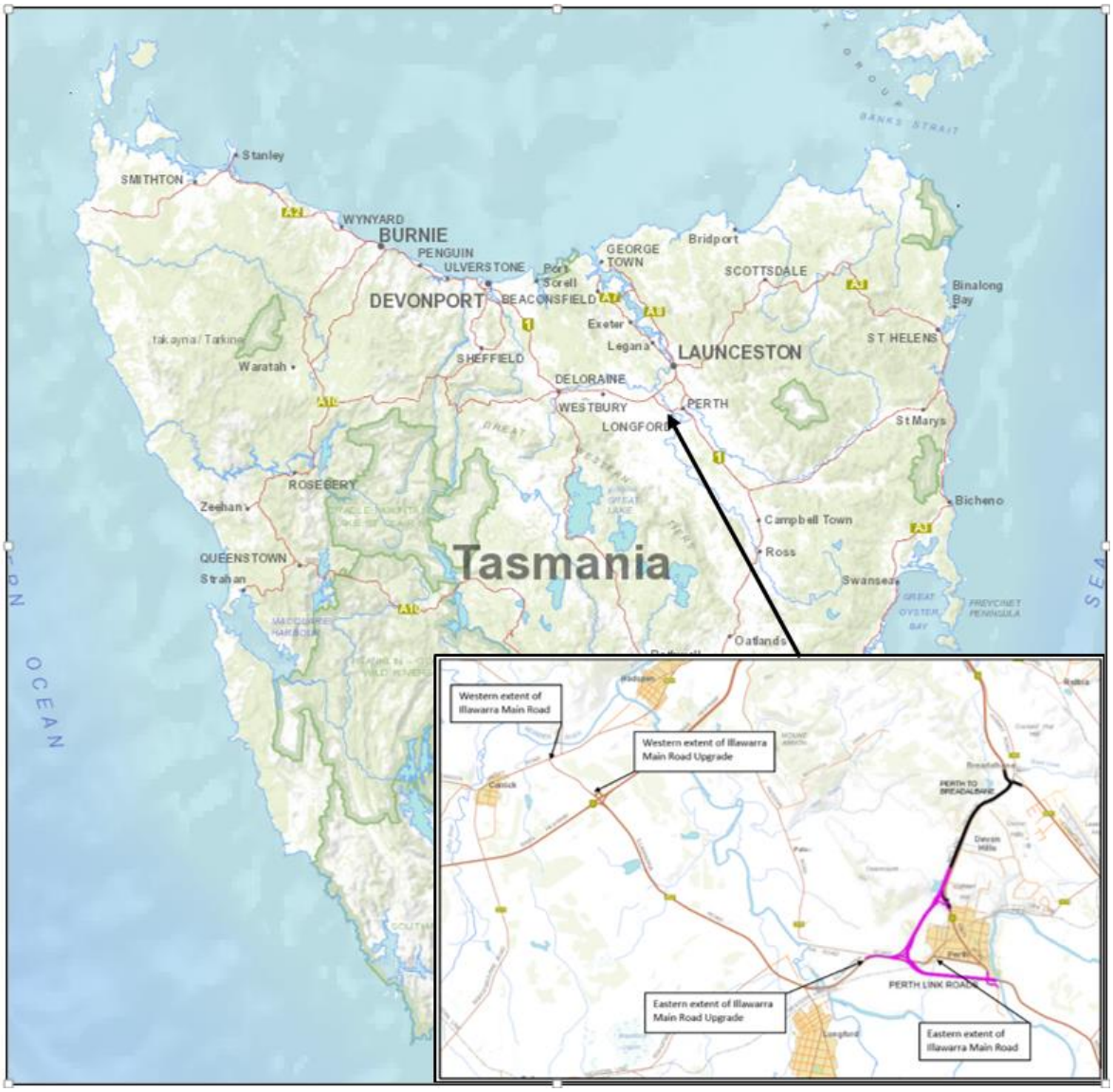

Figure 1: Location of Illawarra Main Road

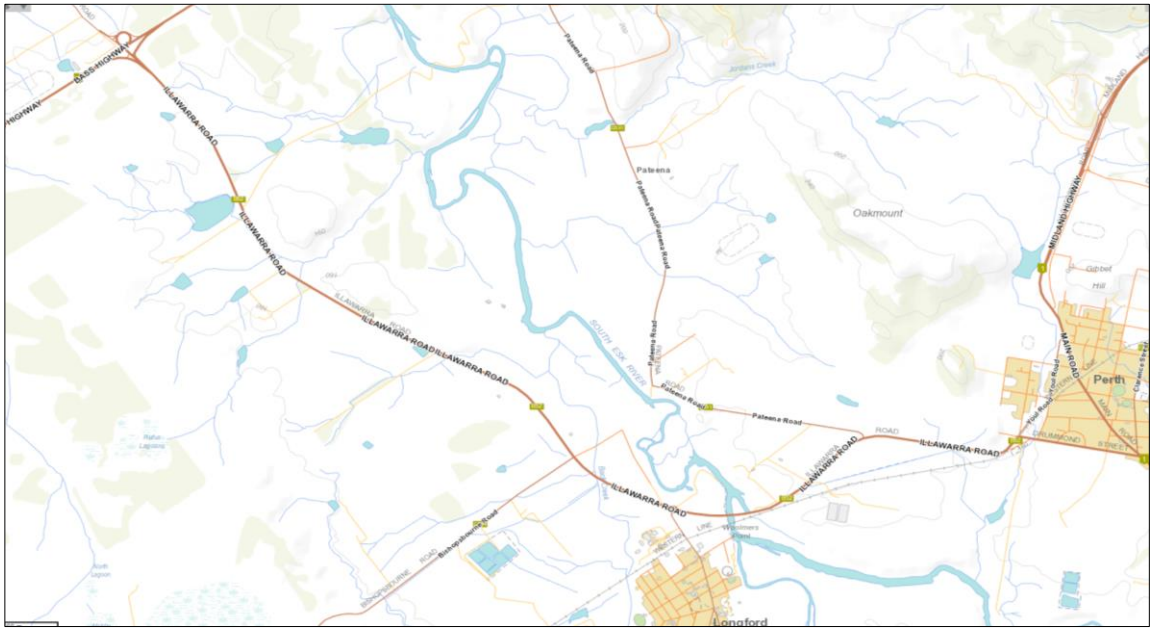

Figure 2: Illawarra Main Road and local context

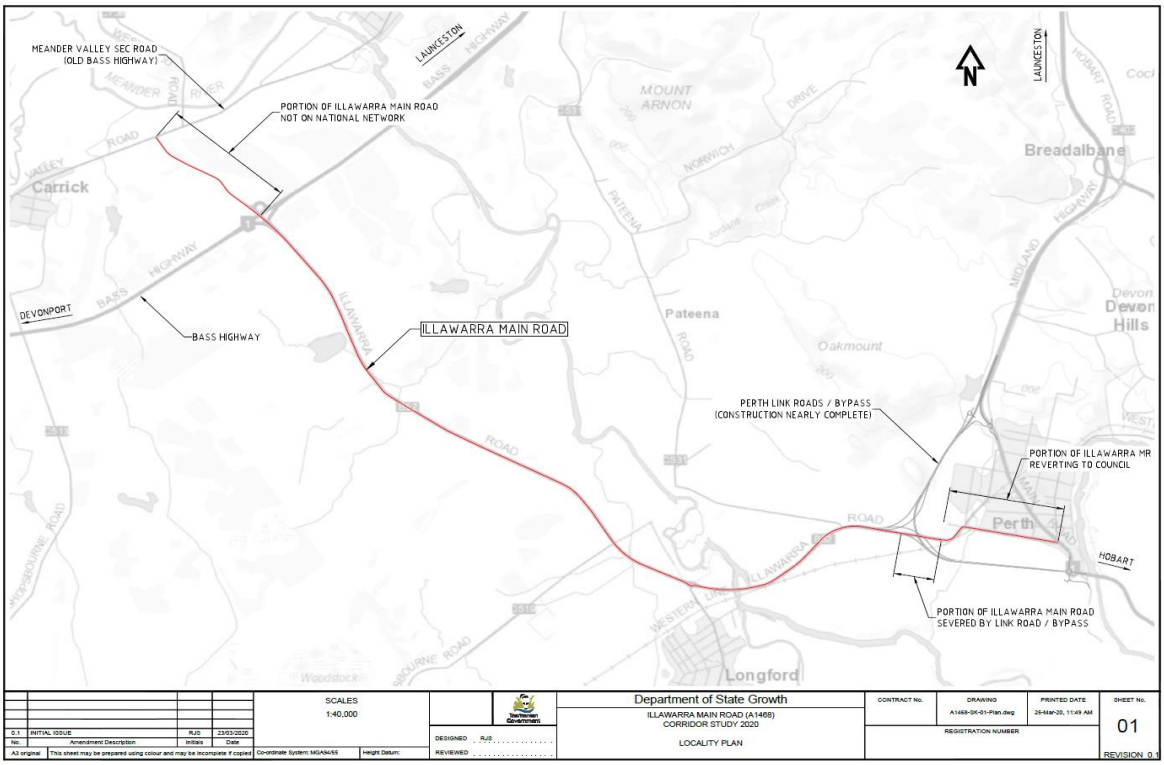

Figure 3: Illawarra Main Road and surrounding road network

2. Project Scope

2.1. Problem/ Opportunity Statement

The Tasmanian Freight Survey provides insight into what freight is transported on the route, the types of trucks used and important origins and destinations. The 2016/17 survey estimates 2,000,000 tonnes of freight utilised Illawarra Main Road, using around 130,000 laden truck movements.

The project has been identified in the Tasmanian Road Package of the 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.

The Illawarra Main Road is a key link in the Tasmanian State road network and provides access to the freight task between Hobart and the northern and north western regions of Tasmania. It eliminates the need to travel via Launceston, reducing travel time by providing a time saving transport link between the Midland and Bass Highways. The upgrade of this connector road would provide a safer and more efficient trip for all road users.

The Illawarra Main Road is currently a single carriageway road with three bridges over the South Esk River, a roundabout taking traffic to the south to Longford and a bridge over Back Creek.

The project objectives are to enhance the freight productivity, connectivity and efficiency on this key freight network, by providing better connections between agricultural regions and ports, airports and other transport hubs and better access for tourism, mining and other sectors and to improve the road network to a Category 1 Road under the Tasmanian State Road Hierarchy and achieve an AusRap 3 star safety rating.

This upgrade would complement the recently completed work on the Midlands Highway Perth bypass and would improve the connection to the Bass Highway.

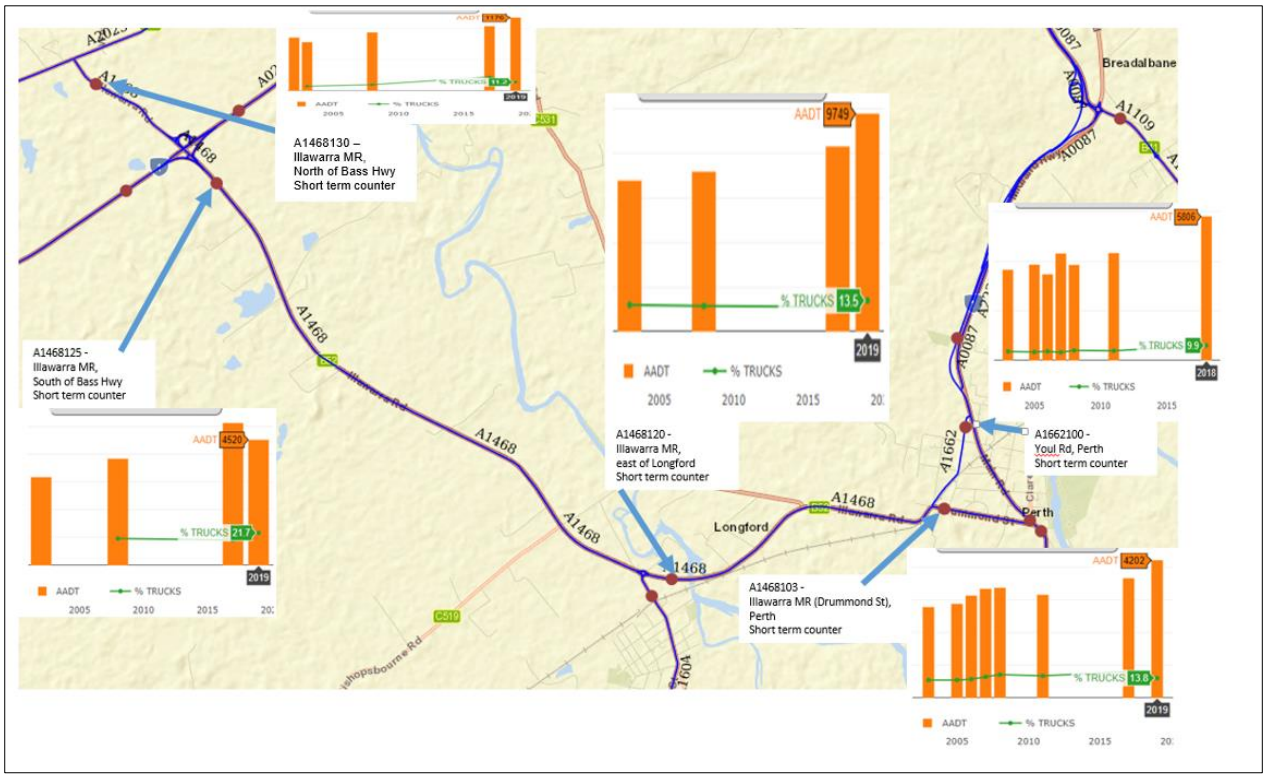

Figure 4: Heavy vehicle and AADT data 2005-2020 (DSG, 2020)

Previous function assessments of the Illawarra Main Road identified the lack of overtaking opportunities for freight vehicles and other road users. A road safety audit also identified a number of issues, including:

- There is cross-sectional inconsistency along the whole road. Lane widths are generally a minimum of 3.5 metres but shoulders widths and road reservation width vary considerably along the length. The narrow shoulder restricts the ability of drivers who inadvertently move out of the traffic lane to recover and potentially contributes to the number of run off the road crashes
- Delineation is inconsistent along the whole length of the road
- Hazardous objects are in close proximity to the road
- Issues with obscured regulatory signage by other signage
- There are a number of side roads which connect onto Illawarra Main Road
- There are numerous private accesses which connect to the road.

2.2. Options Evaluation

This project involves upgrading an existing corridor and focuses on safety and travel time efficiency improvements.

Work has previously been completed to identify the opportunities for upgrade options along the existing route and within the existing corridor. A concept development report was prepared by Pitt and Sherry in 2012 that identified a number of design options for the upgrade.

These upgrade options were reviewed further by the Department of State Growth in 2019/20. The review included an assessment of the four bridges within the project extent and it was determined that the bridges meet the current needs for this section of road. Opportunities to improve the design options were identified and additional detail provided for further assessment and design. The details of the scope of work following the 2019/20 review are outlined in the Section 2.3 of this report and form the current scope of the project.

2.3. Scope of Project

The Project involves upgrades to approximately 11km of the Illawarra Main Road between the Midlands and Bass Highways. The proposed works target improvements to road user safety, travel time reliability and overall road capacity. A Safe Systems approach will be adopted for in the design and construction of the upgrades. The upgrades will improve the road network to a Category 1 Road under the Tasmanian State Road Hierarchy and achieve an AusRap 3 star safety rating.

3. Project Cost

3.1. Overall Project Cost Summary Table

Committed funding for the Illawarra Main Road project comes to $80 million which will be split between the Tasmanian State Government ($16 million) and the Australian Government ($64 million). The Department of State Growth will use probabilistic cost estimation process to assess the total outturn cost

The project scope will be refined using the results cost estimation to ensure the project is delivered in within the project budget.

3.2. Budget profile for the Project

Expenditure of the $80 million allocated budget will be defined during development of the concept design and finalisation of the staging of the works. A budget profile outlining the Australian and State funding contributions per financial year will developed in consistency with the National Partnership Agreement once finalised.

4. Project Benefits

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

Delivery of the upgrade of Illawarra Main Road would have the following effects on traffic and freight movement:

- Improved access and travel time reliability, particularly for movements between the Midland Highway and the Bass Highway
- Provide an upgrade that complements the Perth Links Roads and the east-west connectivity to key freight hubs without the need to travel via the Perth residential area or Launceston
- Provide heavy vehicle rest areas along this major freight route
- Provide an active transport link between Longford and Perth

5. Finance and Procurement

5.1. Preferred procurement method for the Project

It is expected that a traditional construct only procurement model will be adopted for the delivery of this project. This method will allow for designs to be fully developed to accommodate for the stakeholder complexities while minimising risk to the Department on the final designed project outcomes. A design a construct procurement model was considered in the early phases of the project development however this has not been adopted due to limitations identified relating to the likely design solution to be adopted.

A Private Public Partnership is not considered a viable option for this project as there is not appetite or benefit to that model in the Tasmanian market.

5.2. Project Timeline

The critical path for the Illawarra Main Road upgrade project is based on the delivery of detailed design and tender documentation. The project delivery will be staged to allow early delivery of request for tender documentation for Stage 1 in August 2021. It is envisaged the remaining stages of work will be delivered in one or two stages with project completion expected in the 2024/25 financial year.

Activity	Timeline
Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee	March 2021
Request For Tender – Stage 1	August 2021
Award of contract – Stage 1	October 2021
Commencement of works – Stage 1	December 2021
Practical completion of works – Stage 1	June 2022

The key assumptions of the schedule developed for the project include:

- Any required Development Applications are accepted by the relevant councils without any major representations or onerous conditions imposed.
- No environmental or heritage delays impact the Project.
- Property acquisition is completed prior to commencement of construction.

6. Risk and Sustainability

6.1. Major risks, and proposed mitigation strategies

A preliminary risk assessment has been undertaken in accordance with the Department of State Growth process and risk register has been developed.

It is noted that there is only one extreme risk associated to the project and that was identified due to the recent Tasmanian Election. It is acknowledged, however, that a proactive approach to issues management will be required to ensure delivery is managed on time and budget.

The risk register will be further developed through the scoping, development and delivery phases and this will be managed by a risk workshop at each of these stages with mitigation strategies to be reviewed and adopted throughout the project.

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

Given the physical impact associated with such a major road project, environmental and cultural concerns among stakeholders are likely. Mitigation measures will be identified in the risk register relating to environmental, historical and Aboriginal heritage concerns if they arise.

6.2. Major dis-benefits including likely impacts to the community and environment

Construction activities along a road corridor has the potential to impose negative benefits to the community. These could include an increase in travel times, a decrease in travel time reliability, an increase in vehicle operating costs, an increase in air pollution, an increase in traffic accidents, and/or an increase in noise, however all efforts will be made to minimise the impact that the project has on the community and environment.

This project will have an impact on property accesses and may require some property owners to enter and exit their properties in a different way. Discussions with landowners will be undertaken early in the design process to help minimise concerns the landowners may have. The design will be developed, with consideration to reduce the amount property access impacts and to provide a safe option for all property owners.

The overall long-term benefits in travel time savings and safety outcomes outweigh the short term dis-benefits of the construction period of this project.

6.3. Detail any sustainability strategies that will be adopted

The Department of State Growth embeds sustainability in all their activities. For the Illawarra Main Road Upgrade project, sustainability initiatives will be considered by the nominated designer and contractor, during the Development and Delivery Phases. Potential initiatives include consideration of:

- Identification and protection and/or rehabilitation of protected or threatened flora and fauna habitats, as prescribed by the EPBC Act if required
- Modification of culverts and other drainage infrastructure to be in accordance with the recommendations of the Department of State Growth Green and Golden Frog Management Guideline
- Native plants will be used in any landscaping
- Stormwater management identified in the design (reduce runoff volume and flow) and adopted during construction
- Reusing material on site
- Alleviation of greenhouse gas emissions and improvements in air quality through the more efficient running of heavy vehicle freight along the connector road
- Sourcing material locally.

7. Stakeholder Engagement

7.1. Public and Stakeholder participation and consultation

A Stakeholder and Community Engagement Plan (SCEP) has been prepared for this project in accordance with the State Roads Stakeholder and Community Engagement Framework and adopts the practices developed by the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2).

The SCEP is a whole of project document that will be updated and managed throughout each phase of the project.

The SCEP identifies the timing and outcomes of consultation as part of a transparent and well-planned decision-making process and inform stakeholders throughout the project.

7.2. Record of Stakeholder Consultation

Public consultation and stakeholder engagement is being undertaken as part of the concept development phase. The key stakeholders for the Illawarra Road upgrade are:

- Northern Midlands Council
- Meander Valley Council
- Directly impacted businesses and property owners
- Road Users
- Tas Rail
- TasNetworks
- TasWater

The comments, feedback and issues identified during stakeholder engagements will be considered in the design development to determine the most appropriate design for all road users. Further one-on-one meetings with directly affected business and property owners will be undertaken to discuss the project design outcomes.

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

7.3. Directly affected land owners and property acquisition

Consultation has commenced with directly affected land owners and consultation will continue as the project progresses in accordance with the Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement Plan. A Notice of Accommodation Works will be provided to all directly affected land owners which will summarise how the land owner will be impacted by the project and how the proposed design will manage these impacts.

Property acquisition is likely to be required along areas of the project where the existing road corridor is of insufficient width to accommodate the proposed increased road cross section. Additional localised areas of property acquisition is likely to be required in areas of turning lanes, U-turn bays, truck pullover bays and junction upgrade areas.

Property acquisition requirements will be communicated to the affected land owners and undertaken in accordance with the Land Acquisition Act 1993 using the compulsory acquisition process.

8. Compliance

8.1. List Commonwealth or State legislation triggered by the Project

Potential Commonwealth and State legislation that may be triggered by the Project are summarised in the table below.

Legislation	Department / Authority	Likelihood
Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993	North Midlands Council Meander Valley Council	Possible Possible
Land Acquisition Act 1993	Private property	Possible
Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994	Environment Protection Authority (EPA) Tasmania	Unlikely
Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Commonwealth)	Department of the Environment and Energy	Possible
Threatened Species Protection Act 1995	Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment	Possible
Aboriginal Relics Act 1976	Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania	Possible
Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995	Heritage Tasmania	Possible
Disability Discrimination Act 1992	Commonwealth	Unlikely
Positive Provision Policy for Cycling Infrastructure	State Growth	Possible

8.2. Noise

The Illawarra Road Upgrade project is improving the existing highway by enhancing freight efficient and connectivity of the highway. The upgrade works will comprise improvements to the existing road networks. The Tasmanian State Road Traffic Noise Management Guidelines will be applied.

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

Initial environmental flora and Fauna studies have been completed for the Illawarra Road Upgrade project.

Most of the 11 km of road corridor surveyed is highly modified land, primarily improved pasture used for grazing. Native vegetation accounts for under 2.5 hectares of the nominally 100 m wide corridor centred on the existing roadway. Four native vegetation communities are present, including two listed as threatened under Tasmanian legislation and one listed as threatened under Commonwealth legislation.

Recommendations provided by the environmental assessment relative to protection of flora values include:

- Design works to avoid impacting native vegetation,
- Establish machinery exclusion zones in areas of native grass and wetlands,
- Project will require referral to the Commonwealth in accordance with the EPBC Act if any significant on the lowland native grassland community north of the Longford roundabout are anticipated,

- Undertake weed control with the aim of eradicating declared weeds that are currently present in low numbers on road verge and on private land if within works area,
- Weed control and revegetation measures are to be undertaken in conjunction with roadworks. Machinery washdown procedures should be in place to prevent spread of weeds from the site.

Suitable habitat for threatened fauna species is very limited within the project area due to the lack of native vegetation and proximity to the existing major road. However, a probable sea eagle nest was observed in close proximity (approx. 100 m) and within the line of sight of the road. Any works planned within line of sight of this nest will need to consider potential disturbance to breeding activity, if carried out within the breeding season.

Floodplain wetlands, drainage lines and farm dams nearby to Illawarra Road provide some suitable habitat for green and gold frog. Any works that impact potential habitat for the frog will need to follow green and gold frog management guidelines Targeted frog surveys may need to be carried out as part of these guidelines.

Recommendations provided by the environmental assessment relative to protection of fauna values include:

- Confirmation of absence of breeding eagles prior to works within line-of-sight of potential nest during breeding season (July to December),
- If road construction works require modification of culverts and other drainage infrastructure the recommendations of the Department of State Growth (2015) Green and Golden Frog Management Guideline must be adopted.

There are no significant changes proposed to the existing highway alignment. The works involve an increased road cross section, overtaking facilities, turning facilities and the addition of a shared user path between Perth and Longford. These works are expected to remain largely within the existing road reserve. Therefore, these works are expected to have low landscape and visual impacts on the surrounding area.

Where vegetation such as hawthorn hedgerows will be required to be removed as part of the upgrade works these may be replaced as necessary to maintain the visual amenity of the area. Such works will be undertaken in accordance with a developed cultural landscape management framework (refer to Section 8.4 of this report).

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 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. There are four places subject to the Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995 and the Heritage Code of the Northern Midlands Interim Planning Scheme 2013 including:

- Longford Rail way Bridge and Viaduct
- Wickford Property

- Esk Farm Property
- Mountford Property

The Heritage Code of the Meander Valley Interim Planning Scheme 2013 remains unpopulated, and therefore will not apply to the road upgrades. The Historic Heritage Assessment field survey recorded 194 sites or features comprised of:

- 23 sites at Mountford, primarily plantings.
- 1 site at the Longford railway viaduct.
- 8 significant hawthorn hedgerows located throughout the rural landscape.
- 8 significant plantings in the vicinity of Tannery Road north.
- 1 potential archaeological site at 723 Illawarra Road.
- 55 sites at Esk Farm, 752 Illawarra Road and its approaches, primarily plantings.
- 6 sites at Esk Farm Cottage, 752 Illawarra Road.
- 4 sites at Wickford, 868 Illawarra Road.
- 7 sites at Valleyfield, 873 Illawarra Road.
- 2 sites at the Wickford Mill site, 868 Illawarra Road.
- 2 macrocarpas in the rural landscape.
- 9 sites at Christ Church.
- 4 significant elms on Illawarra Road.
- 1 monument to the Illawarra Road deviation.

In addition, several plantings have been recorded but assessed as not having heritage significance within an assessment framework.

The historic heritage assessment recommends that all conflicting heritage design issues be clearly disclosed to Heritage Tasmania and the Northern Midlands Council prior to any design finalisation along with the Meander Valley Council, noting that its' Heritage Code is not operational.

The historic heritage assessment suggests approaching the road upgrades through a cultural landscape management framework which aims to minimise the impact on the project landscape. Where road works may impact on significant trees, advice should be sought from a qualified arborist to determine the extent of protective exclusion zones and should any trees be proposed for removal, replanting options should be determined along with any ongoing management and maintenance requirements.

8.5. Planning Approvals

The proposed works are located within the municipalities of the Northern Midlands and Meander Valley Councils. As such, they are subject to the provisions of the Northern Midlands Interim Planning Scheme 2013 and the Meander Valley Interim Planning Scheme 2013.

Under the Northern Midlands Interim Planning Scheme 2013 and Meander Valley Interim Planning Scheme 2013, the land along the corridor is variously zoned Rural Resource, Utilities, Open Space and Environmental Management. The dominant land uses are agriculture (grazing, cropping, horticulture) with some residential uses.

The land area is also encumbered by a number of overlays and Codes, including Bushfire Prone Areas Code, Flood Prone Areas Code, and Priority Habitat overlay. A number of properties along the corridor are Heritage listed either under the Tasmanian Heritage Register, or within the Council's Planning Scheme.

Appendix A: Public Display Plans

Appendix B: Community Consultation & Feedback Report