

Tasman Highway Hobart Airport Interchange to Midway Point Causeway

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I. Introduction

I.1. Project Name

Tasman Highway – Hobart Airport Interchange to Midway Point Causeway

I.2. Project Summary

Sorell, 27 kilometres to the east of Hobart, is one of the fastest growing areas in Tasmania. The main transport corridor between Hobart and Sorell is the Tasman Highway which also serves the Hobart International Airport. Pre Covid 19 traffic on the highway was growing at approximately 3% per year and the Airport had experienced significant growth in passenger numbers and associated traffic volumes. Traffic volumes are returning to pre Covid levels and congestion occurs regularly on this section of the Tasman Highway. Between Hobart and the Airport, the Tasman Highway is a dual carriageway, however from the Airport to Sorell the highway is only a single carriageway and carries in excess of 20,000 vehicles per day. These traffic volumes result in significant traffic delays for road users particularly during peak periods when the theoretical lane capacity of the highway is exceeded.

Recognising the deficiencies in the 9 kilometre section of highway between the Airport and Sorell, including amenity and congestion issues within the township of Sorell, the State Government has committed to the South East Traffic Solution (SETS). This is a multi-level short and medium term vision that will reduce congestion and improve level of service and travel time reliability between Sorell and the four lane section of the Tasman Highway at Hobart Airport.

The key components of SETS are

- The Hobart Airport Interchange project (under construction)
- Upgrading of the 2.7 kilometres section of the Tasman Highway to four lanes between the Hobart Airport Interchange and the Midway Point Causeway (this project)
- The Midway Point Intersection Solution – upgrading the 1 kilometre section of the Tasman Highway through Midway Point to four lanes and replacing the Penna Road roundabout with traffic signals (under construction)
- The 2.1 kilometre Sorell Southern Bypass linking the Tasman Highway with the Arthur Highway (under construction)
- An overtaking lane on the Arthur Highway at Ironstone Creek, 3 kilometres east of Sorell (completed)
- Duplication of the Midway Point and Sorell Causeways (under investigation).

The various components of the SETS program are shown in Figure 1 below.

The component of the SETS program that is the subject of this submission is the highway upgrade between the Hobart Airport Interchange and the Midway Point Causeway.

The two-lane, section of highway between the Airport and the Midway Point Causeway has a poor crash history and safe access to and from the highway is becoming increasingly difficult due to the limited gaps in highway traffic.

Five options were investigated and the selected design was chosen following community consultation and extensive consultation with directly impacted stakeholders.

The selected design follows the alignment of the existing highway with widening on the northern side of the highway over the first 1.2 kilometres to avoid impacting on the airport runway apron. Past the runway zone the highway is widened on each side to minimise impacts on both the Tasmania Golf Club and the Milford property which contains threatened orchid species. Detailed design has been completed and the following Approvals are in progress.

- Approval under the Commonwealth Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC)
- Approval to construct part of the works on Commonwealth (Airport) Land noting that the State compulsory acquisition process does not apply to acquisition of Commonwealth land.

1.3. Project Location



Figure 1 Project Location

1.4. Related Projects and Strategic Context

- The Hobart Airport Interchange project replacing the existing at grade roundabout at the intersection of the Tasman Highway and Holyman Avenue (airport access) with a grade separated diamond interchange.

https://www.transport.tas.gov.au/projectsplanning/road_projects/south_road_projects/hobart_airport_interchange

- Midway Point Intersection Solution

https://www.transport.tas.gov.au/projectsplanning/road_projects/south_road_projects/south_east_traffic_solution/midway_point_intersection_solution

- Sorell Bypass

https://www.transport.tas.gov.au/projectsplanning/road_projects/south_road_projects/south_east_traffic_solution/sorell_southern_bypass

- Duplication of the Midway Point and Sorell Causeways

https://www.transport.tas.gov.au/projectsplanning/road_projects/south_road_projects/south_east_traffic_solution/tasman_highway_between_airport_and_sorell

- The Arthur Highway Overtaking Lane

https://www.transport.tas.gov.au/projectsplanning/road_projects/south_road_projects/south_east_traffic_solution/arthur_highway_overtaking_lane

- Planning Study identifying potential solutions to address congestion, improve level of service and travel time reliability around the four key themes of road infrastructure, public and active transport, intelligent transport systems upgrades and land use.

https://www.transport.tas.gov.au/projectsplanning/road_projects/south_road_projects/sorell_to_hobart_planning_study

2. Project Scope

2.1. Project justification and need

The key challenges on the section of the Tasman Highway between Hobart Airport and Sorell are its limited capacity and the growing transport demand. The Sorell municipality has one of the highest growth rates in Tasmania (1.3%). The highway corridor provides access for commuters, freight and tourists. Agriculture, forestry and fishing have been traditional industries in the area for many years and the expansion of the South East Irrigation Scheme into the Sorell region is opening up significant further opportunities for agriculture. These factors have led to growth in traffic volumes on the Tasman Highway of over 3% in recent years. The highway between the Airport and Western Causeway is at capacity in both the morning and afternoon peaks and currently carries over 20,000 vehicles per day. This traffic volume is well above the traffic volumes at which 2 lane roads are normally considered for upgrading. The population in the region is typically interspersed, low density and is highly reliant on car travel. Limited job opportunities in the region result in almost 64% of workers commuting to workplaces outside of their local area.

2.2. Options Evaluation

The Sorell to Hobart corridor study identified four key themes of road infrastructure, public and active transport, intelligent transport systems upgrades and land use. Bus services from Hobart to Sorell and Midway Point were improved significantly in January 2019 and other efficiency initiatives such as common ticketing and bus priority lanes are under investigation. A park and ride facility at Midway Point is also being planned as part of the Midway Point Intersection Solution. At a strategic level, the Tasmanian Government and the Department of State Growth are investigating initiatives to encourage development in areas closer to the city that are better served by essential services and transport. Irrespective of these alternatives there is a clear need for additional highway capacity between the Airport and Sorell. Alternative routes to the Tasman Highway have been investigated at a high level however the Department's policy is to upgrade existing corridors where possible rather than creating new ones. The Department also believes that creating a new corridor will not eliminate the need to upgrade the Tasman Highway to four lanes into the future.

A public consultation process was commenced in May 2019 and covered the entire SETS program including the Airport to Midway Point Causeway section. The following activities were carried out.

- Initial consultation with 18 landowners/key stakeholders prior to going out to broader community consultation.

- A four week public engagement period
- The projects comprising SETS were posted on the Department's website and its Facebook page and this was further shared by Sorell Council and Clarence City Council
- A Social Pinpoint on-line feedback page was established, and this was live during the engagement period
- Posters outlining the projects were setup at Tasmania Golf Club, Ingham's chickens and the Sorell Council Chambers
- Five drop in engagement sessions of 2 to 3 hours duration were held at various location in Midway Point, Sorell and Dodges Ferry
- A presentation to the Tasmania Golf Club

Congestion along the existing Tasman Highway was a major concern for many respondents and the overwhelming view was that upgrading of the highway was necessary.

The public consultation process included two options that were investigated for the highway upgrade between the Airport and the Midway Point Causeway. These are summarised below.

Option 1 – 80 km/h design, northern alignment

This roundabout option avoided impact on the Milford property but still encroached onto the 16th fairway to an extent that was of serious concern to the Golf Club.

Option 2 – 80 km/h design southern alignment

This roundabout option avoided impact on the Golf Club and encroached into the Milford property by approximately 40 metres. This resulted in a lower impact on the threatened species but was still viewed as detrimental to the habitat supporting those species.

As a result of the public consultation process a new option was developed that avoided significant impacts to both the Tasmania Golf Club and the Milford Forest (orchid habitat). This option includes the use of traffic signals to manage the Pittwater intersection, resulting in a reduced footprint.

Preferred option – 80 km/h design minimising impact on both Milford and the Golf Club

This option acquires some land from the Tasmanian Golf Club, the Milford Property and the Hobart International Airport. This option ensures the golf course can remain as a premium playing course, although with some modifications required. It does not impact any of the known threatened orchid plants but does impact potential orchid habitat and has minimal impacts to the Hobart International Airport.

The preferred option (as with Option 2) is located partly on Hobart Airport land which is under Commonwealth Government jurisdiction. This will require a suitable arrangement to be struck between the Tasmanian and Commonwealth governments on land tenure for the parcel in question.

The preferred option was accepted by impacted stakeholders as the best option, was then released back out for public consultation and was then selected by the Department for design development. Detailed design has been completed.

The final design includes two lanes in each direction with traffic signals to manage traffic coming from side roads. The traffic lights will operate on demand, instead of a timed cycle, giving priority to the Tasman Highway. A shared pathway is provided on the northern side of the road linking through to the Hobart Airport.

2.3. Scope of Project

The project will provide 2.6 kilometres of dual carriageway with a signalised intersection at Pittwater Road. The signalised intersection will also provide access to the Tasmania Golf Club and the adjoining Barilla Bay Oysters commercial property via new service roads. The existing highway pavement will largely be retained. From the airport to Pittwater Road it will become the westbound carriageway and from Pittwater Road to the causeway it will become the eastbound carriageway. A separated cycleway will also be included within the road reserve.

Safe system principles include consolidation of multiple access points into a single intersection controlled by traffic signals. Additional vehicle actuated signs will be installed on the highway that will warn approaching vehicles of an impending red light. The separated cycleway will encourage adoption of active transport and improve safety for cyclists. Roadside hazards and opposing traffic streams will be protected by wire rope safety fence.

2.4. What the Project will achieve

The overall SETS program (excluding the causeways) will deliver travel time savings of over 9 minutes on the average journey time between Sorell and the Airport. The Airport to Midway Point Causeway project on its own will deliver average travel time savings of over 3 minutes per trip. In addition to the travel time savings the journey will be more reliable and predictable in terms of travel time. Three existing junctions that are heavily congested and subject to long wait times to enter and leave the highway will be replaced with a single traffic controlled intersection. The average delay at the signals on the new road is predicted to be approximately 20 seconds and after 20 years it is predicted to be approximately 30 seconds. Without the highway upgrade the existing junctions simply will not work into the future.

The project requires acquisition of approximately 1.2 Ha of frontage along the Tasmania Golf Course. Because the highway will be closer to the playing areas of the course there is a need to realign the 16th fairway and reverse the direction of hitting at the practice area. Whilst there will be some disruption to normal golf course activities whilst this work is done, there is a long term benefit to the Club in providing a safer course through the modification works. Currently the 16th hole and the practice area do not meet contemporary safety standards and the Golf Club, in the absence of the highway works, is unlikely to be in a position to upgrade these sections of the course to meet current safety standards.

Project benefits are further described in Section 4.1 below.

2.5. Fitness for Purpose and Value for Money

The proposed highway upgrade provides a well designed 80 km/hr 4 lane arterial road. 80 km/h is a suitable speed for this section of the highway recognising the safety benefits of 80 km/h compared with 100 km/h and the short distance to Midway Point and then Sorell both of which have 60 km/h or lower speed limits.

The project has a benefit cost ratio of over 9 which is very high and indicative of the current congestion problems and the significant gains that will be made through carrying out the upgrade.

3. Project Cost

3.1. Overall Project Cost Summary Table

Costs are summarised in the table below with a detailed estimate in Appendix C.

	P50 (\$M)	P90 (\$M)
Base Cost Estimate	24.3	24.3
Contingency	2.7	4.1
Total Project Cost Estimate	27.0	28.4
Escalation	0.3	0.3
Total Outturn Cost Estimate	27.3	28.7

3.2. Budget profile for the Project

Financial Year Forecast Milestone Requirement

P50 Outturn (or Actual as appropriate)		FY 19	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23
		(\$m)	(\$m)	(\$m)	(\$m)	(\$m)
	Australian Government contribution	0.08	1.44	0.40	8.00	11.92
	State Government contribution	0.02	0.36	0.10	2.00	2.08
	Other contribution (provide detail)		0	0	0	0
	Total	0.10	1.80	0.50	10.00	14.90

4. Project Benefits

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

The duplication of the Tasman Highway between the Airport and the Midway Point Causeway will benefit road users through:

- Reduced travel times
- Lower vehicle operating costs
- Lower accident rates
- Lower greenhouse gas emissions
- Increased cycling access – delivering health benefits
- Higher business productivity
- Enhanced connectivity within the Sorell region and with Greater Hobart, the East Coast and the Tasman Peninsula.

Safety improvements will be delivered by new flexible safety barrier (including separation of opposing traffic streams), consolidated highway access points, improved traffic management infrastructure at key intersections, separated cycle paths, enhanced streetlighting and removal or treatment of roadside hazards.

A total of 2.6 km of new cycleway will provide new access for commuting and recreational cyclists – leading to increased cycling activity which brings improved health to participants and lowers health costs.

There are also wider economic benefit which flow from the ability of business and freight users of the new highway to increase output due to time and vehicle cost savings.

4.2. Good use of public funds

In addition to the benefits delivered by the project as described above, the project will also generate significant employment. Road construction in Australia delivers approximately 2 direct jobs per million dollars spent (New South Wales Treasury Employment Support Estimates – methodological framework, TRP 09-3). A further 3 indirect jobs are generated through the flow of intermediate purchases throughout the economy resulting from the construction expenditure ie those sectors supplying materials and resources to the construction sector will require their own inputs. In summary approximately 5 fulltime equivalent annual employment opportunities are created per million dollars spent in road construction. For this project this is over 130 jobs.

5. Finance and Procurement

5.1. Preferred procurement method for the Project

The preferred procurement method is a single construct only contract using the Department's standard request for tender and conditions of contract.

5.2. Project Timeline

Activity	Timeline – Completion Date
Concept Confirmed	November 2019
Environmental Investigations	November 2019
EPBC Approval ¹	November 2021
Planning Permit	September 2021

Detailed Design	Completed 2021
Land Acquisition excluding Commonwealth land	Completed 2020
Commonwealth Land approval	November 2021
Agreement with Golf Club on terms and conditions of modification works	November 2021
Call tenders for highway works	February 2021 ¹
Construction commencement	May 2022

¹ Commonwealth land approval and EPBC approval both need to be obtained before tenders can be called and time frames for these approvals remain uncertain.

5.3. Materials and maintenance

Standard road construction materials that comply with Department of State Growth Specifications will be used in the works. These products include crushed rock for pavements, insitu and precast concrete, concrete pipes, bitumen and asphalt for road sealing, safety barrier, fencing materials and plastic pipe for service ducts and road signs. Concrete and crushed rock products will be supplied from southern Tasmania with a hard rock quarry at Flagstaff Gully being located approximately 14 kilometres from the site. Precast concrete components and road signs will be manufactured by local suppliers. Safety barrier will be supplied by Australian manufacturers and it is understood that the majority of these product uses Australian steel.

The pavement has a 20 year design life after which time it would require some form of rehabilitation either by addition of an overlay, or mechanical stabilisation by addition of a strengthening agent such as cement or bitumen. A two coat sprayed seal is proposed for the pavement and this has a typical life of approximately 7 years before resurfacing is required. Paved medians have been provided to minimise the maintenance task. Roadside batters will be planted with native vegetation to minimise the area that will require mowing.

6. Risk and Sustainability

6.1. Major risks, and proposed mitigation strategies

Major project risks and current and proposed mitigation strategies are summarised in the table below.

Risk Description	Mitigation
Service alterations exceed cost estimate	Estimates have been obtained from authorities, and appropriated contingency allowance has also been made
Contract claim during construction	Quality and completeness of documentation, comprehensive investigations, performance requirements in the specification, clarification of risk allocations between Contractor and Principal
Scope of works at Golf Club	Engage golf course designer, review requirements with Golf Course through finalisation of the specification
ITS requirements at Pittwater Intersection	Review requirements with client and align with safe system approach
Delay to construction due to stakeholder issues	Ongoing engagement with key stakeholders (Golf Course, Milford) identify key issues and resolve collaboratively with stakeholders
Land values /compensation exceed estimates	Obtain advice from Valuer General and provide additional contingency for Golf Course
Delay to construction start due to approvals	EPBC submission and Development Application are under evaluation. Negotiations with Hobart International Airport and the Commonwealth are in progress to formulate an interim tripartite lease arrangement (as recommended by the Commonwealth) prior to the final acquisition. The lease will permit construction and operation of the highway.

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

Project disbenefits relate to the impact of the works on adjoining properties

- Impact on Milford forest, loss of approximately 1 hectare including flora and fauna habitat, noting that the Department is arranging for replacement planting of 1 hectare of trees, predominantly white gums, to replace the trees that will be lost.
- Impact on Tasmania Golf Club involving realignment of 16th Fairway, loss of tree screening, modifications to practice area, reduction in playing amenity of the course while the modification works are carried out.

6.3. Sustainability strategies that will be adopted

The project will be designed to 80 km/h standards rather than 100 km/h, noting that the existing speed limit on this section of the highway is 80 km/h. This will reduce earthworks volumes and hence reduce the carbon footprint during construction. During operation, the reduced speed will result in reductions in fuel consumption and associated reductions in CO₂ emissions of approximately 600 tonnes per year, compared.

The 80 km/h design also allows most of the existing highway pavement to be retained, whereas a 100 km/h design would have required all new pavement.

A separated cycleway will be constructed through over the length of the project. Ultimately a separated cycleway will be available over the full 6 kilometre length of the highway between the Airport and Sorell, noting that east of Penna Road the cycleway will be diverted through the local road system before connecting to the cycleway on the Sorell Causeway. As well as providing an active transport alternative between the Airport and Sorell over flat terrain and a manageable distance, the cycleway will provide important connections to the cycle route along Kennedy Drive to the west of the Airport.

The planting of 1 hectare of white gums on the Milford property will replace an equivalent area of trees that will be lost due to clearing for the new highway.

7. Stakeholder Engagement

7.1. Public and Stakeholder participation and consultation

An initial public consultation for all the SETS projects commenced in 2019. The engagement process and outcomes are summarised in Appendix B. Consultation occurred at the “Consult” Level of the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum and, at the time of the initial consultation, decisions had not been made on the final solutions for any of the projects. Having obtained input to the projects at this level and incorporated feedback to the extent possible, ongoing participation continued at the “Inform” Level with the following objectives.

- To work closely with key stakeholders to achieve mutually acceptable project outcomes.
- To inform the community of the progress of the project and other components of the South East Traffic Solution.
- To provide feedback on the previous engagement process, highlighting where the feedback helped inform the design, and where it couldn't be considered and why.

The decision on the selected preferred option for the Airport to Midway Point Causeway project was made after a several meetings with the directly impacted individual stakeholders (Hobart International Airport, Barilla Bay Oysters, Milford and Tasmania Golf Club). This was followed by two further meetings involving all these stakeholders and also including representatives from Sorell and Clarence Councils.

Engagement risks have been identified and are summarised below

Risk	Mitigation
Stakeholder consultation fatigue and confusion	Planning, timetabling and combining public consultations / information to address the needs of several projects. Airport to Western Causeway, Midway Point intersection works and Sorell Bypass works should have combined engagement to minimise this concern.
Engagement not genuine doesn't provide any tangible input to the project.	Providing clear explanations of where previous feedback was able to be included, and where it couldn't be included and why.
Lack of understanding of concept designs and plans	Timetabling of and careful design of visual consultation materials such as plans, maps and video.
Concerns regarding the construction timetable and impacts upon traffic movement and access	Information about timing of anticipated works needs to be available. Obtain information regarding anticipated construction impacts. their timetabling to hand during engagement sessions.
Negative media coverage	Ensure the key messages continue to be provided to the community either one on one or on State Growth website, ensure adequate time is provided for people to be involved in the various elements of the project. Respond to inaccurate messages when they are submitted.
Dissatisfaction from Milford property and Tasmania Golf Club about the ultimate outcome	Regular communication with these stakeholders and responding to their requests with advice from Crown Law, the Valuer General and in accordance with Departmental policy

7.2. Record of Stakeholder Consultation

Date	Type of Consultation (stakeholders invited i.e. industry, community)	Issues raised	Management plan
Ongoing	Targeted consultation with affected property owners	Impact on property, revised access, compensation entitlement and process, accommodation works	Follow Department of State Growth Policy and Procedures
Ongoing	Meetings with Local Government Authorities	Input to design where appropriate, agree changes to local government infrastructure, Planning Permit requirements	Follow Department of State Growth Policy and Procedures
Ongoing	Information on the selected design solutions	Design solution, anticipated construction timeframe	In accordance with Department of State Growth Stakeholder Engagement Framework and the project Stakeholder and Community Engagement Plan
Ongoing	Media releases highlighting key project milestones	Tender release, award of contracts, construction milestones, major traffic changes	In accordance with approved procedures

7.3. Directly affected land owners and property acquisition

<p>Hobart International Airport PID 7593048</p> <p>Acquisition of 1.1 Ha of Commonwealth land on the southern side of Highway, west of Pittwater Road (PID 7593048).</p> <p>Acquisition of 1.3 Ha of land on the northern side of the highway opposite the airport runway (PID5179476)</p>	<p>In principle support has been obtained from the Commonwealth for the acquisition of Commonwealth land.</p> <p>A tripartite lease (Commonwealth, Hobart International Airport, and State Growth) is being arranged as an interim measure to allow the works to proceed whilst the lengthy Commonwealth land acquisition is progressed.</p> <p>PID 5179476 has been compulsorily acquired under the Road and Jetties Act.</p>
<p>Milford PID 2864597</p> <p>Acquisition of 0.82 Ha on the southern side of the highway. Highway access about 600 m east of Pittwater Road to be changed to left turn in- left turn out.</p>	<p>The required land has been compulsorily acquired under the Roads and Jetties Act.</p> <p>1 hectare of white gums will be planted on the Milford property to compensate for trees lost to road clearing</p>
<p>Tasmania Golf Club PID 5179476</p> <p>Acquisition of about 0.7 Ha in 2 parcels. Impacts on 16th and 17th fairways, putting green on 1st hole, tee on 2nd hole and practice area.</p>	<p>Modifications are to be made to the course to maintain its amenity and rating as a championship course. The work includes</p> <p>Modifications to the 16th fairway to ensure safety or road users from errant golf balls</p> <p>New water storage dam to accommodate realignment of the 16th fairway</p> <p>Realignment of 17th fairway to accommodate the new 16th fairway.</p> <p>New green to 1st hole and new tee for 2nd hole.</p> <p>Realigned practice area to reverse direction of hitting so that it is away from the highway.</p>

8. Compliance

8.1. Commonwealth or State legislation triggered by the Project

EPBC approval is required because of the potential impact on the threatened orchid species located on the Milford Property

8.2. Noise

No noise protection is required for any properties located along the project.

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

An initial flora and fauna survey was carried out on the proposed new road corridor between October and December 2018 and a Natural Values Assessment Report prepared in February 2019. Following further development of the options for upgrading the highway in this location a more detailed flora and fauna survey was conducted in October and November 2019 and a further Natural Values Assessment Report and a Matters of National Environmental Significance Report were prepared for the proposed widened road corridor.

The selected design avoids impact on all identified threatened orchid plants but reduces buffers and screening to some of the potential orchid habitat. As a consequence the impact has been deemed a Controlled Action under the EPBC Act.

The width of the proposed new road corridor has been restricted to the minimum required to limit impacts on adjoining properties, in particular the Tasmania Golf Club and the Milford property. Disturbed surfaces will be reinstated with grass with a preference for native species. Some screening planting will be provided on sections of the new boundary with the Tasmania Golf Club. A vegetation management plan for the roadside near the Milford Forest will be developed to enhance the development of orchid habitat into the future.

8.4. Heritage (Aboriginal and Historic)

An Aboriginal Heritage Assessment Report was prepared in October 2018. Previous investigations had identified a site on airport land west of Pittwater Road that would be impacted by the new works. The October 2018 investigation could not locate this site.

8.5. Planning Approvals

A Planning Permit under the Clarence Interim Planning Scheme 2015 will be required for the work. The Development Application has been submitted and a permit issued.

Appendix A: Project plan released for public consultation

Appendix B: Stakeholder and Community Consultation Feedback Report